DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 201 186 FL 012 189

TITLE	Study Modes and Academic Development of Overseas Students. ELT Documents, 109.
INSTITUTION	British Council, London (England). English Teaching Information Centre.
REPORT NO	BC-ELT-109
PUB DATE	80
NOTE	152p.
AVAILABLE FROM	The British Council, Printing and Publishing Department, 65 Davies Street, London W1Y 2AA, England (2.50 British pounds).
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; Arabs; Engineering Education; *English for Special Purposes; *Foreign Students; Higher Education; Indians; Science Education; *Study Habits; Team Teaching
IDENTIFIERS	Iranians; Thai People

ABSTRACT

The following articles on the performance of foreign students in English universities are included: (1) "Team Teaching and the Role of the ESP Teacher" by P. Skehan; (2) "Performance of Overseas Postgraduate Students: A Management Teacher's View" by J. C. Watt; (3) "Experiences of a Postgraduate Physics Course Tutor with Overseas Students" by R. K. Fitch; (4) "The Structure of Postgraduate Taught Courses in Engineering: Some Implications for Language Course Design" by J. E. Price; (5) "Thai Students Studying" by R. Hawkey; (6) "Writing Problems of Iranian Students" by D. Houghton; (7) "Study Modes and Students from the Middle East" by A. Dudley-Evans; (8) "The Background of Students from the Indian Sub-Continent" by R. Bowers; (9) "Responses of Overseas Students to Differing Teaching Styles" by A. Brew; (10) "Survey of University of Manchester Overseas Post-Graduate Students' Initial Level of Competence in English and their Subsequent Academic Performance: Calendar Year 1977" by K. James; and (11) "Some Code Features of Examination Scripts: A Comparison between Native Speaker and Non-Native Speaker Answers" by G. M. Greenall. (JB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

The papers in this volume are the edited proceedings of the SELMOUS Easter Seminar held from 18 - 20 April 1979 at The University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

The SELMOUS Group (Special English Language Materials for Overseas University Students) is a group of lecturers from British universities specifically appointed by their institutions to research into the language problems of overseas students and to develop appropriate English Language courses.

ELT Documents is now including a correspondence section. Comments arising from articles in current issues will therefore be most welcome. Please address comments to ETIC, The British Council, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BN.

The articles and information in *ELT Documents* are copyright but permission will generally be granted for use in whole or in part by educational establishments. Enquiries should be directed to the British Council, Printing and Publishing Department, 65 Davies Street, London, W1Y 2AA.

ISBN 0 901618 31 4

© The British Council, 1980
Produced in England by The British Council, Printing and Publishing Department, London

Printed in England by Tonbridge Printers Ltd.

3M/11/80

CONTENTS

Page

INTRODUCTION 5
G M Greenall & J E Price

Seminar Overview 7
K James, University of Manchester

SUBJECT AREA CONTRIBUTIONS 22

Team Teaching and the Role of the ESP Teacher 23
P Skehan, University of Birmingham

Performance of Overseas Postgraduate Students: A Management Teacher's View 38
J C Watt, University of Aston in Birmingham

Experiences of a Postgraduate Physics Course Tutor with Overseas Students 44
R K Fitch, University of Aston in Birmingham

The Structure of Postgraduate Taught Courses in Engineering: Some Implications for Language Course Design 50
J E Price, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne

SPECIFIC CULTURAL PROFILES 69

Thai Students Studying 70
R Hawkey, The British Council, London
& C Nakornchai, SOAS, University of London

Writing Problems of Iranian Students 79
D Houghton, University of Birmingham

Study Modes and Students from the Middle East 91
A Dudley-Evans, University of Birmingham
& J Swales, University of Aston in Birmingham

The Background of Students from the Indian Sub-Continent 104
R Bowers, The British Council, London

CONTENTS (contd)

Page

RESEARCH INTO FACTORS AFFECTING ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT 114

Responses of Overseas Students to Differing Teaching Styles 115
A Brew, University of Essex

Survey of University of Manchester Overseas Post-Graduate Students' Initial Level of Competence in English and their Subsequent Academic Performance: Calendar Year 1977 126
K James, University of Manchester

Some Code Features of Examination Scripts: A comparison between Native Speaker and Non-Native Speaker Answers 134
G M Greenall, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Introduction

حديث الرسول محمد (ص)
اطلب العلم ولو في الصين

'Seek knowledge even if it is in China' (Hadith)

We may perhaps use this quotation, from a culture strongly represented in the overseas student body in Britain, to capture the willingness of all those who seek knowledge abroad to expose themselves to foreign cultures. Willingness alone, however, does not automatically remove the problems of such a venture, and educators within such foreign cultures should in turn show willingness in recognising these problems, even to the extent of suspending their own cultural assumptions.

Such sentiments inspired the choice of theme for the seminar. The group felt that consideration should be given to those cultural problems which, compounded with language problems, overseas students appear to have in adjusting to the different study demands made on them in Britain; though very little was known about the issues involved, it seemed nevertheless a useful exercise to pool existing ideas and related research.

The papers* are organised very much as they were delivered, but with some modifications to section titles in order to reflect more closely the actual proceedings. The first paper which, as the title suggests, served as an introduction to the whole seminar, includes some comments on how a small sample of overseas postgraduate students characterize a good tutor. The other papers are arranged under 3 broad heads:

1 Subject area contributions
2 Specific cultural profiles
3 Research into factors affecting academic development.

Each section is preceded by an editorial note.

One of the most satisfying aspects of the seminar was the contact with subject specialist colleagues. Close co-operation between subject specialists and service language teachers clearly contributes to the academic development of overseas students. Ventures into team teaching seem in particular to be a promising step in this direction.

---

* not included in this publication is (i) a paper given by T Johns (University of Birmingham), 'Team Teaching', to be published in ELT Docs (forthcoming;. (ii) a paper given by P Robinson (University of Reading), 'Venezuelan Students: C Case Study'; (iii) reports by D Knight (University of Leeds) on his film 'Learning to Communicate' and by A Hayes and G Liesching (British Council) on the films 'Activity Days in Language Learning' and 'Communication Games in a Language Programme'.

What the seminar perhaps lacked was an informed contribution from sociology. However, the lack of rigorous sociological underpinning did not detract from the valuable and urgently needed insights provided by representatives of other disciplines into the adaptation problems of overseas students.

G M Greenall and J E Price

7

SEMINAR OVERVIEW

Kenneth James, University of Manchester

There was this Englishman, this Frenchman, this German and this Spaniard. And they all went to the University of Sussex to study elephants. And naturally enough, being not only ambitious scholars but also extremely wise men, they wanted to do a piece of fundamental research: something which would both advance the new and exciting discipline of elephantology and at the same time make discoveries (or at least - as some of the more cautious said in their footnotes - make it possible, later, to make discoveries) which would make this world a better place to live in. The sort of thing that leads to a University Chair. So they all thought long and hard, and when the great day came they were ready with their titles and their outlines. First came the Englishman who opted for 'Ecological Implications of Self Government among the Elephants of S. Somalia: Findings from Five Case Studies'. Next the Frenchman with 'The Role of Structure & Logic in the Love-Making of Elephants: a Dialectical Approach'. Thirdly, the German with 'A Prolegomena to a Taxonomy on the Species of Elephant Tusks with Special Reference to the Economics of the Third World'. And finally the Spaniard with: 'The Elephanticity of the Elephant'.

Anecdotes like these, of course, are successful only in so far as they capture what are perceived to be the favoured **styles** and the characteristic **interests** of what are thought to be distinctive cultures. The fact that such anecdotes form a genre (they even merit a special language when recounted) suggests the power that they exert and the need they fulfil. Of course, the styles may be wrongly ascribed, the interests crudely attributed. Worse still, such anecdotes may be employed to reflect or even to create prejudice. If contact with the 'subject' of the anecdote - the Englishman, the Frenchman, the German, the Spaniard - is limited, patronising caricatures all too readily take hold. For all these reasons (among others) teachers normally perceive it as part of their job to fight such stereotypes; they take special care to avoid such traps. In a determination to avoid these traps, however, I would suggest that they may fall into others which are also, if not equally, dangerous. Thus a desire to resist the caricature may deny valid insights into the character of the culture. In an extreme form, this attitude may lead to a rejection of any generalization concerning a cultural group. However, whether we care to admit it or not, culturally determined preferences as regards study methods and objectives certainly exist, and an important result of any reluctance to make them explicit will be to deflect interest and research from such areas. 'All comparisons are odious' goes the traditional refrain, 'but cultural comparisons are more odious than others', comes the late 20th century amendment. Such an attitude may at least help to explain why there is such a paucity of information on the learning styles and study modes which characterize the world's major cultures, when a distinctive characteristic of the latter half of the 20th century has been the growth of mass international study.[1]

But why should the study modes of overseas students be of any concern to their language tutors, whose job is to deal with their language problems? Of the many reasons that may be given, it is perhaps worth singling out four for special consideration.

Firstly, language tutors necessarily have to deal with important aspects of the study modes that many of their Overseas Students are required or are encouraged to adopt when working in a British University environment. For students from non-European cultures the ability to write effectively in an assignment, or to perform adequately in a seminar, can be as much a cultural as a linguistic challenge[2]. The organization of written discourse and the patterns of spoken interaction vary widely between different cultures. What is admired in the English culture may be despised in the overseas cultures; what characterizes the one may be non-existent in the other. Perhaps I should make explicit here, what it has so far only been possible to infer, namely that 'culture' is being used in the anthropological sense to refer to all aspects of human life in so far as they are determined or conditioned by membership in a society. Thus language as well as characteristic styles of teaching and learning are considered as part of a culture. The tutor who lacks relevant insights into these, and who in particular lacks specific knowledge of a student's characteristic study modes, is likely to be handicapped in attempting to develop appropriate written and verbal skills.

Secondly, in a desire to develop a communicative competence in their students, language tutors need to know how and for what the language is customarily used in the special subject areas characteristically taught by Universities in this country. This may often differ widely from the way in which language is employed to teach the special subject in the overseas cultures. Language tutors also need to know which study-mode aspects of the host culture cause linguistic or psycho-linguistic difficulty. The information on the former, ie special uses of language, may provide the tutor with at least some of his language objectives (certainly for most of the students these objectives are likely to be paramount); the information on the latter, ie general study-mode problems, may suggest relevant themes for a more general English for Academic Purposes course[3]. (A point worth noting, in this respect, is that apart from the fact that many overseas students seem to like to participate actively in arriving at appropriate study strategies, they are keenly interested in different cultural attitudes and behaviours. Language materials which make use of such themes often seem to possess built-in motivation.)

Thirdly, language tutors specifically need to know the preferred learning styles and the content expectations their students hold when they learn a language. If certain groups of overseas students feel that second language learning is mainly a question of knowing in explicit detail the rules of grammar, then this clearly has an effect on their learning, irrespective of whether they are 'right' or 'wrong' to hold such views, and regardless of whether the language tutor shares these views or not. While much of this information on content expectation and learning style is gleaned the hard way - by the practical experience of teaching students from different cultures over a number of years - more precise profiles are always helpful in that they make it possible for the tutor to be less impatient with such attitudes; more subtle, perhaps surer-footed, in the ways he can help.

Finally, there is the whole business of helping the student to communicate effectively and to behave appropriately in the routine aspects of his new culture (the aspect with which he will most closely engage himself being language behaviour in the life of an alien academic community). Not the least advantage of Pre-Session Courses is that they provide an on-campus University working environment for students who often need time to come to terms with this before the pressure of the first term of their Academic Year. It is my experience, and discussion with colleagues from other Universities leads me to believe it is perhaps a common one, that overseas students frequently use language classes to clear up cultural problems, often perceived as such only after careful diagnosis. Having got to know their language tutor fairly well during the Pre-Session Course, ie before the academic year has begun, students turn to him during the difficult first half of the first term as someone who will have the patience and the skill to help them formulate these problems, the sympathy and the insight to guide them towards possible answers. Again, this seminar aims to deepen these insights and make it possible for such sympathy to be better informed.

So far we have considered the risks that are run and the benefits that may be derived from a discussion of the study modes and academic development of overseas students. I should like now to direct attention to the way we have chosen to tackle our theme in this seminar.

The seminar is divided into three main areas. We start with 'Subject Area Contributions' in an attempt straight away to focus on the problems that are going to be crucial to the students we all teach. Two of the speakers are subject specialists themselves and it will be invaluable for language tutors to learn how students with language deficiencies and cultural gaps are able to cope in their chosen discipline. I would, in this respect, particularly draw attention to the introduction of Mr Watt's paper *'Performance of Overseas Postgraduate Students - A Management Teacher's View'*. What he attempts is so apposite and so much in the spirit of what this seminar intends that it is worth quoting extensively:

> This paper is not the outcome of an academic study but simply an attempt to put together in a structured way my experiences of overseas students on a postgraduate Masters course in Systems Analysis over the last five years. My aims are twofold: first, to present my experiences and observations to the English teachers here on the assumption that these may be useful in the development of their teaching programmes; second, to try and formulate some questions which I feel all of us here need to address if our higher educational institutions really wish to provide

a worthwhile education for overseas students. The theme underlying this paper is that while proficiency in English is a necessary prerequisite it is only part of what needs to be a much broader approach to the induction or acclimatization of these students.

Next come the 'Specific Cultural Profiles'. An attempt has been made here to explore four areas - the Arab Middle East, Iran, the Indian Sub-continent and Thailand, all of which, send large numbers of students to post graduate courses in Britain. Post-graduate students will in certain cases act as informants in these sessions which aim to achieve insights and provide perspectives on the special difficulties that students from various cultures in these areas frequently seem to encounter in their studies in British Universities.

The third and final session, 'Research on Factors Affecting Academic Development', attempts amongst other things to investigate in precise detail teaching styles that overseas students often encounter. It concludes with an analysis of the examination scripts of non-native speakers and of the relationships between language proficiency and academic success. Detailed and highly rigorous as it is, this final section can only focus on a few aspects of the student's overall involvement with an alien academic experience. It might be helpful, therefore, as this is an introductory paper, if I attempt a preliminary sketch of the major processes at work in the **total** cultural interaction which takes place when our overseas students operate in a British University. In this way, I would hope, we may better be able to see how the various elements of the seminar cohere, which important elements have been merely touched on, and which ones have been left totally unexplored. First though, it is necessary to explore further the concept of 'culture'.

You may remember it was stated earlier that I had been using this term in an anthropological sense. Of course, that statement left some important questions unanswered. The remarks which follow attempt very briefly to deal with perhaps the most urgent of these.

Cultural anthropology aims to produce concepts and other elements which are universal, objective and theoretically significant. Unfortunately, and perhaps not surprisingly, these aims have remained unrealized. The discipline, for example, as opposed to Linguistics, has developed very little internationally agreed terminology. Thus everything that we may attempt to express in comparing cultures must be appropriately tentative, as the conceptual framework does not yet exist to allow us to be at all definitive.

Behind such a generalization lies the hard fact that there are rival 'schools' of cultural anthropology. One of these, the functionalist, stresses that each culture is a unique reality and that cross-cultural comparison does not make sense. While it would seem that this might well be a perfectly respectable theoretical position to hold, it is, I would suggest, one which

11

is impracticable if not impossible for the Tutors to Overseas Students to adopt. The Tutors, after all, witness so many attempts by their students to 'translate' the foreign culture into the host culture, that they too cannot avoid comparing the two cultures nor can they help judging how far such a 'translation' has been successful. Thus I would argue the Tutor will find himself naturally predisposed towards those schools of anthropology which permit cross cultural contrasts at the level of individual human action, attitudes and decision-making. Historically, the school which encouraged such analyses was the Configurationist. Its founder, Ruth Benedict, believed that the culture patterns, or configurations, of a society select particular character types out of the range of possible human behaviour that the society favours, while inhibiting opposite types. She claimed that each culture over the ages had developed a distinctive 'psychological set' or orientation towards reality and that this set actually determined how the members saw and processed information from the environment. Culture, in effect, is distinctive from one society to another and it affects the ways in which the mind works.

Such a model, however, is too simplistic, lacking as it does any scope for the individual culture to be measured against the universal cultural needs of Man or for the individual human to modify the culture into which he was born. Some of these problems have recently been tackled by Welte (1977) in a theoretical paper of considerable power and much persuasiveness. The paper, entitled *'The Interrelationships of Individual, Cultural, and Pan - Human Values'*, places values (defined as 'elements of underlying cognitive structure') at the heart of the decision-making process. Values are involved in cognition, emotion and conation. While they they are distinct from one culture to another, the power of a culture to shape the individual's values is in no way determinist. Welte's view in this respect follows that of Morris Opler's (1964), namely that 'man manipulates and uses his culture for his own ends quite as much as he is subject to it.' The psychological basis of culture 'lies not only in a capacity for highly complex forms of learning but in a capacity for transcending what is learned; a potentiality for innovation, creativity, reorganization and change.' (Hallowell, A. 1960). Clearly any model which contains such elements in its approach would be helpful in trying to understand how our overseas students mediate the two academic cultures they experience, namely the culture in which they have learned how to succeed, and the one in which they hope to succeed.

We are now then in a position - having briefly indicated what we mean by culture - to attempt a preliminary sketch of a) the principal factors involved in the interaction between overseas studens and their academic host community and b) the different types of reaction that overseas students display in this setting. This sketch is summarized in tabular form later on.

ED201186

ELT DOCUMENTS

109 - Study Modes and Academic Development of Overseas Students

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

The British Council

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

The British Council

ENGLISH LANGUAGE DIVISION CENTRAL INFORMATION SERVICE

FL012189

Several points need special emphasis before I comment on the table in detail. Firstly and most importantly the analysis is preliminary. It is quite possible that in the light of further experience I shall change the wording or even the content of some of the slots; I may further be persuaded that factors such as age might usefully be included. Secondly, the table is **not** intended to imply that there is a 'pure' Type 1., Type 2. or Type 3. student. It could, however, be considered as a preliminary attempt to investigate whether such types do in fact exist, and if so whether the attitudes which appear in the various slots have been adequately and relevantly characterized. Finally, no attempt is made in this table, (though our cultural predispositions will make it difficult for us to believe this) to ascribe any superiority of one type of attitude/expectation over another. Granted, British tutors may 'prefer' certain attitudes in their students, but that would be an individual matter for each tutor, and such preferences are in no way intended to be reflected in the table.

We are now in a position to examine the table in detail. The first column attempts to list the principal factors in higher educational experiences to which students have to respond. The other three columns attempt to characterize their responses. Thus when a student comes from a very different culture it is important to know how far he resists important aspects of day-to-day British University life (first row of Table 1). To take one example which is less trivial than it may at first seem: is the student's sense of punctuality consonant with how the host university defines this? Any language tutor who has had experience of running courses with a large number of different nationalities well knows how important such a simple factor as this can be. Again, is the student able to accept what might in some cases seem to be the impersonal and unrelenting rules of an alien examination procedure?

Moving down to the second row of the table, we next consider the attitude of the student towards extending his language competences in learning English. Is he going to be satisfied with a minimal subject-matter communicative competence? If the majority of overseas students answer this question in the affirmative the language tutor will have to ask himself the following types of questions: 'How realistic an aim is this? In aiming for the **minimal**, is not the student likely to achieve the **negligible**? How is minimal subject-matter competence to be specified? Is it administratively possible to achieve such an aim if one's students are drawn from a large number of subject specializations?' etc. etc. He may, of course, reject out of hand an aim of minimal competence. If this is the case, he must consider how best to shift the students' attitude.

The third row of the table deals with the attitude of the student towards his special subject. He might view this simply as a means of obtaining a post-graduate qualification. Students from some countries, for example, frequently want to gain a doctorate in order to promote themselves out of their profession into administration or government. Knowledge of such an attitude has an important bearing on the guidance and supervision a tutor may wish to give.

Then, in the fourth row of the table, there is the attitude the student displays, and the expectation he holds, towards the learning process. Here, of course, we have reached the heart of the matter and so it may be appropriate if such attitudes are treated rather more in detail.

TYPES OF CULTURAL INTERACTION IN AN ACADEMIC SETTING

	Overseas Students' Attitudes/Expectations		
Crucial Areas of Academic Interaction	**TYPE 1**	**TYPE 2**	**TYPE 3**
British University Institutional and Academic Behaviour	Aims to make minimal changes	Aims to be bi-cultural	Aims to identify totally with British University
Working in a Foreign Language	Aims to achieve minimal communicative competence in special subject matter only	Aims to achieve general communicative competence	Aims to approximate to native-speaker in all aspects of language
Special Subject	Viewed mainly as a means of gaining a qualification	Viewed mainly as a means of professional improvement	Viewed mainly as a source of personal/intellectual satisfaction
Learning Process	Interpreted primarily as knowledge processing ie comprehending, sorting, storing and relating facts	Interpreted primarily as developing techniques to solve problems	Interpreted primarily as criticising, exploring creating and discovering
Fellow Students	Seen mainly as helpers	Seen mainly as Independent colleagues	Seen mainly as Competitors
Tutor	Thought of mainly as a director	Thought of mainly as an advisor	Thought of mainly as an assistant

The student's experience of learning in his own country may have predisposed him to a view of learning which emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge stores, what is characterized in the table as Type 1 style.[4] In certain societies, these stores may well be viewed, for all practical purposes, as fixed and definite. True, various arrangements of the facts may also have to be learned, but processing or synthesizing the facts will often amount to learning which given arrangements are right and which are dubious or (better still') wrong. Solutions to problems will tend not so much to be worked out, as learned in sets of interrelated fact; the requirement to extrapolate or to solve novel problems will be considered unwarranted and 'unfair' in such a context. Rote learning will be encouraged, passive understanding emphasized and relevant reproduction tested. Knowledge acquired is expected to be reproduced to pass an examination rather than used to solve a problem in the world outside. Questions, where they occur at all, will tend to come from the students (rather than the teacher) and their aim will be characteristically to comprehend or to clarify the facts.

Perhaps an anecdote may be employed to illustrate the power of such a set of attitudes. In one overseas school situation of this type at pre-university level I witnessed an intelligent but exasperated student ask his English language teacher (an expatriate Briton), employing a standard British 'question and answer' technique in a reading comprehension passage, 'Why are you asking us so many questions? Don't you know the answers?' In this particular society the education system seemed (at least to this British observer) to have been equated with the examination system, and the teacher's major responsibility was to ensure that all the students (irrespective of ability) who passed through the system passed the examination at the end of it.

It may, of course, properly be objected that even if a student has come from such a learning environment, he is unlikely to get as far as undergraduate or post-graduate work overseas without having been able to extend his learning styles to include at least some mastery of Type 2. While this is very likely to be true (it is on the whole the exceptional student who who studies abroad), it is surely more than probable that under the pressure of a heavy work load, alien teaching styles, linguistic handicaps and a foreign culture, most overseas students at least some of the time will return to earlier more deeply rooted attitudes and patterns of behaviour (where these are different from British ones). Thus the problem of an 'inappropriate' style of learning[5] (which the student may judge it prudent to try to conceal) is, if I am correct in my analysis, much more persistent than we might realise or than we would expect.

A second objection, and a valid one I think, is that the student who comes from an 'exotic' culture does not necessarily reflect all the values of that culture. He may quite possibly be dissatisfied with what he has done at home and wish to develop other learning styles, indeed may already have started to do so before his arrival in the United Kingdom.[6] In this respect, it is worth emphasizing that some overseas students, even from societies which predispose their students to a Type 1. attitude towards the learning process, may come to Britain and be disappointed that there is insufficient discussion or opportunity to be critical or creative in the work that they do. All this is, of course, to make the perfectly simple point that in so far as there are cultural types, the occasional individual may lie on or even outside their borders: there is, in short, an exception to every rule.

We have talked so far, perhaps rather glibly, of knowledge processing, problem solving and so on. It is, of course, a truism, but nonetheless well worth stating, that such terms have never adequately been defined. What does one mean by 'problem' and 'solving' for example? Such are the questions which currently exercise certain practitioners in the field of Curriculum Theory and Evaluation. Mauritz Johnson (1979)[7] for example, has recently very pertinently asked what the range of problems is that students are taught to solve. Can a taxonomy be developed to classify such problems along a number of dimensions? Bases, he suggests, might be substantive (intellectual, personal, societal); whether or not paridigmatic-algorithmic; whether the solution is convergent or divergent; whether solved individually or collectively; then there might be bases for knowing when the problem is solved; and so on. Such a single taxonomy, he concludes, might later serve to investigate differences in emphases between different cultures. It is, of course, this sort of data we need in order to test the matrix that has been put forward for inspection.

It seems at the moment that such data is conspicuous by its absence, though studies reported by Wright et al. (1978), showing cultural differences in probabilistic thinking,[8] would seem to suggest that such an area of research might well be significant and illuminating.

Before moving on to the next row of the Table (Fellow Students), it may be useful to consider how the attitude towards the learning process may affect language learning itself.

Preferred learning styles and deep-rooted expectations as to what is to be learned in a particular subject obviously strongly affect the way in which a student learns English. His progress may be hindered by a refusal to accept that language learning is anything other than amassing a large vocabulary or memorizing a list of grammatical rules. It may be rendered more difficult by a reluctance on the part of the student to accept any responsibility to seek out opportunities to **use** what has been taught. Language learning may be viewed as irritating and disturbing because when language is employed as an instrument of communication, constant decisions have to be made on the basis of incomplete, tentative, of even conflicting grammatical resources; and the student may come from a background where that sort of decision-making is utterly alien, and where the fact that the classroom instructional facts are partial or still to be discovered is a denial of the natural order of things. Deeply held attitudes, characteristic of distinctive cultures, towards the status of writing and speech, some of which will be undoubtedly explored in the second section of the seminar, also affect the way in which important aspects of language learning are approached.

As the time at our disposal is limited, it is now necessary to leave the question of learning styles in order to examine briefly the attitude of overseas students towards their peers. (Row 5, Table 1.) This will have most relevance where academic work involves a lot of student inter-action, perhaps taking the form of discussion or group project work. No-one would deny in this area that individual psychological factors play a critical role, but cultural patterns determine the expression, the range and the norms of such inter-relationships. Thus a student from a culture which emphasizes the Type 1 relationship (where fellow-students are seen as helpers) may attempt to help a fellow student in ways which his native culture comes near to condoning, but which the host culture totally forbids. Help given to fellow-students in work intended for evaluation or even in a formal examination setting often leads to embarrassing consequences in such cases.[9] Another less publicized but nonetheless harmful aspect associated with such peer attitudes may be the prolongation of a dependent relationship; a weaker or less self confident student may come to rely on a stronger one, for example, and in the context of his own cultural attitudes he may find it very hard to see the damage that this can do. There are of course many positive aspects however to viewing fellow students as helpers, an attitude strongly prevalent in certain societies.

Finally, in the sixth row of the Table, an attempt is made to characterize the expectations the student holds as regards the role of the tutor. Clearly post-graduate study is for most, at some time anyway, a rather nerve-racking business and this would seem particularly so for overseas students. All students from whatever cultural background appreciate very firm direction in the earlier stages. Some, however, cling to attitudes which seem to be native to their culture and which assume that the tutor bears the major responsibility for a student's work. In discussions with a small but representative sample of non-European overseas post-graduate students[10] and in essays which they have submitted (on the qualities they think a good tutor should have), this topic is mentioned again and again. Most students, however, write in favour of Types 2 and 3, ie the tutor is thought of mainly as adviser or even assistant. The manner in which these students expressed themselves on this question, though, often seemed to indicate that it was a new type of relationship with which they were grappling and that it was a relationship they often had to be educated into. Thus one student, typical of many expressed it thus 'The tutor should guide the students to the subject in the way that gives them an opportunity to ask and discuss. He should **introduce** (my emphasis) the students to the ways of self-study and working independently'.

We have now completed our discussions of the Table, and I should like now to develop the theme of how overseas students characterize a good tutor. This will constitute the final part of this introductory paper.

A very striking result obtained from the essays and the discussions of my sample was the mention of the friendliness and informality among the majority of the British tutors who had obviously been adept at putting students at their ease before embarking on constructive criticism or discussion. This was appreciated by almost all students right across the sample. One student, however, a middle-aged male of high status from a Far Eastern culture, not only failed to refer to this factor but also had such deeply entrenched proxemic attitudes that he refused to sit alongside me when I discussed his written work, insisting on taking up a position on the other side of the desk. Informality, or what he perceived as informality, in this case clearly disoriented (the word is singularly apt) the student. A further personal observation in respect of formality is also perhaps worth making. This concerns the initial bewilderment and utter disorientation which occur when students from certain backgrounds (the Turks, I have found to be most prominent in this respect) find humour mixed with higher learning. It is not just that humour is often culture bound and frequently exigent in the demands it makes on language competence; it is simply that for certain cultures humour and higher learning do not mix, and so the tone may be interpreted as something akin to frivolousness or even to blasphemy. Of course, in time, students learn to appreciate, or perhaps to put up with, such a style, but the earlier stages may be troublesome.

Another matter of great concern to the overseas students was the question of tutor accessibility and contact time. The majority of students interviewed expressed a view in line with one mature student who wrote 'Being a tutor or supervisor means not only to want to help but also to have time to do so.' Another complained 'Most of the supervisors are too busy and can only spare ten to fifteen minutes to (sic) their students in a week, which is not nearly enough to help a student in his or her research.' This is an experience that seems to be limited to overseas students from Departments whose post-graduates are almost entirely British. Where a Department consists largely of overseas students it would seem that their special need for more generous supervision (at least as regards time) is recognised by the staff; it is certainly appreciated by the student. What may make this problem peculiarly difficult for the overseas student is that in his own society he may have a tradition of much more frequent and much more easy access, as of right. (Though the converse may, of course, also be true). An appointment system may be alien and the business of coming straight to the professional point without the preliminary and sometimes lengthy social courtesies may be interpreted as most unpleasant, if not downright crude.

The next quality my sample of overseas students mentioned as being desirable in a tutor was a surprising one - surprising not from the point of view of its relevance, but from the point of view that it was stated at all. About a third of the students in my sample thought it was important that their tutor should be well-qualified. And on the whole what they seemed to mean by this was that they should have doctorates and be a mine of information on a very wide number of very specialized topics. One student,

18

who came from a culture I would judge to be characterized by many Type 1 attitudes wrote 'The supervisor should have enough knowledge to answer the practical and scientific points. However, unfortunately, this is not correct in every case, particularly in the very advanced and very specialized topics.' When I questioned him and learned that he was doing a very specialized area of research into the chemistry of the brain, it seemed to me that perhaps his type of expectation of the role of the tutor and perhaps even his understanding of the basic process of learning were at odds with the Type 3 behaviour (see Table) he was expected to display in order successfully to complete his research. He seemed to want a tutor in short who knew the answers to what he was trying to discover. As they say in the North of England, he wanted the cake and the penny. I suspect that many overseas students from a non-European background may be more prone to this sort of tension than their British counterparts.

Finally the overseas students I interviewed, almost without exception, placed great emphasis on the tutor's ability to take a sensitive and sympathetic interest in them as human beings. This meant not only taking a real interest in their work, encouraging them and sustaining them, but also meant understanding their personal anxieties and problems. The two are of course inextricably mixed and it is not in the least surprising that these students expressed such a view, one which we might equally expect from a British student.

It might be as well in concluding this introductory paper to remember that this seminar is likely to predispose us to concentrate on difference and difficulty. We should perhaps bear in mind, and I shall later be able to present some compelling evidence to this effect, as far as my own University is concerned (see my article in this volume) that the vast majority of our overseas students are successful in their studies and seem to do just as well as their native counterparts. Many, in my experience, and I feel sure this is an experience generally shared by participants here to-day, derive a great deal of satisfaction through their new learning experience and come to form relations of respect and affection for the men and women who teach them. Their success, however, is not won without much cost: switching cultures, especially when it also means changing languages is never easy. The more we understand about the processes involved, the more we as tutors will be able to ensure that the price paid is not too heavy; the more also we will be able to help our students realize their full potential. These very individual and very human aims are what has brought this seminar about.

Notes

1 There are, of course, other reasons apart from this attitude. Mastery of such different fields as anthropology, psychology, sociology and linguistics is rare; the ability to carry out inter-disciplinary studies which would make

use of these is even more rare. It may be that for a long time, therefore, contrastive studies of cross-cultural learning styles will be suggestive rather than elegant, infrequent rather than common. Scholars have reputations to lose as well as problems to solve and the burden of the former may well outweigh the fascination of the latter. In addition 'there is a more honourable, though fallacious, reason for the reluctance of the scientific establishment to initiate, encourage, or support the study of the complex problems of human life. It is the strange assumption that knowledge of complex systems will inevitably emerge from studies of much simpler ones.' (Dubos, 1968)

2 See the work of Kaplan (1972) in this respect. Recall, also, the frequently observed difficulty that Thai students experience in making critical contributions in seminars.

3 Attempts to exploit some of these themes for classes composed of students from different subject disciplines may be seen in such courses devised by Heaton (1975) or James, Jordan & Matthews (1979).

4 Abbott (1978) makes a similar point in discussing problems in mounting ESP courses. Widdowson (1975), on the other hand, emphasises the view that the study of science is culture free. While I would agree that science as a discipline is international, I would suggest that the way that it is taught and learned and applied may very well vary considerably from culture to culture.

5 Again we must be cautious here. Knowledge processing plays an important part in studying at University in this country and may be much more central to the learning process in some courses than many British tutors would care to admit. There may also be times when a problem-solving approach is inappropriate for certain types of students engaged in certain types of learning.

6 The overseas student may have been taught in his own country by 'Western' expatriates whose approaches to teaching a subject discipline are supported by the appropriate Ministry though neither encouraged nor sustained by the host culture.

7 Personal correspondence, though see Johnson (1967) for an interesting statement of general theoretical issues in this field.

8 Wright et al (1978) concluded that 'cultural differences in probabilistic thinking have clearly been demonstrated, the largest difference being between the Asian student groups and the British student groups. The Malay Arts students generally show the least command of probabilistic thinking. British students adopt a more finely differentiated view of uncertainty, both verbally and numerically than do the Asian groups'. An interesting implication that the authors point out is that 'any' extrapolation of the technology of decision

analysis to Asian cultures should be approached with caution, for the subjective probabilities required as inputs may be meaningless.'

9 It is interesting to note in this respect that some comparative educationalists and anthropologists employ the term 'systems-beating' in order (presumably) to reflect the lack of moral oppobrium felt by students in societies where, what students in 'Western' societies would call 'cheating', commonly takes place.

10 The sample consisted of 18 post-graduate students: 4 Latin American, 7 Near/Middle Eastern, 4 Far Eastern plus 2 Europeans (Greek) and 1 Algerian. It is representative in that the balance struck between the different areas is roughly typical of the post-graduate level entry for the University in which the survey was conducted (ie Manchester). Each student was asked to write on the following: 'Excluding considerations of language, in what way is studying at a British University different from studying at your University at home? Which of these differences do you like and which do you dislike? Give reasons.'

The essays were marked and discussed with each individual. While it is notoriously difficult to get criticism from overseas students (some cultures inhibit it for social and political reasons), the relationship between student and tutor was in this case a very close one, and the students seemed to understand that they would be helpful only if they answered the questions genuinely and in detail. The same group of students was later given a second question - 'Describe the most important qualities you think a tutor or supervisor ought to have. What do you miss most in this country as regards the teaching and tuition you receive? What do you feel you have gained most?'

This question was also discussed orally when the essays were returned.

The comments made in the final section of the Introductory Paper are based on the above essays and discussions.

References

ABBOTT, G W A (1978)
Motivation, materials, manpower and methods: some fundamental problems in ESP. *ELT Documents, 103*, The British Council, London

DUBOS, R (1968)
So human an animal. New York: Scribner's

HEATON, J B (1975)
Studying in English. Longman, London

HALLOWELL, A I (1960)
Self, society and culture in phylogenetic perspective, in Evolution after Darwin, volume two, *The Evolution of Man.* Edited by Sol Tax, p. 361. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

JAMES K, JORDAN R, MATTHEWS A (1979)
Listening Comprehension and Note-Taking Course. Collins Study Skills in English

JOHNSON, M (1967)
Definitions and models in curriculum theory. Educ. Theory, 17, 127-40

KAPLAN, R B (1972)
The anatomy of rhetoric. Centre for Curriculum Development, Philadelphia, Pa (Language & the Teacher: A Series in Applied Linguistics, 8.)

OPLER, M E (1964)
The human being in culture theory. American Anthropologist 66: 507-528

WELTE, C R (1977)
Interrelationships of Individual, Cultural and Pan-Human Values in Language and Thought: Anthropological Issues Edited by W C McCormack and S A Wurm. Mouton

WIDDOWSON, H (1975)
EST in Theory & Practice, p. 6-7, in English for Academic Study. An ETIC Occasional Paper. The British Council English Teaching Information Centre

WRIGHT ET AL (1978)
Cultural Differences in Probabilistic Thinking. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, Vol. 9, No. 3

SUBJECT AREA CONTRIBUTIONS

Certain university courses have large percentages of overseas students; many are composed predominantly, a few exclusively, of overseas students. The papers in this section take a close and detailed look at a few such courses. Fitch and Watt as subject specialists, and Skehan as an EFL specialist, speak about courses with which they have been directly concerned, and Price reports on a survey of a number of postgraduate courses of this type in the Engineering Faculty of Newcastle University. All papers examine the academic, cultural and linguistic demands made, and comment on the observed, presumed or possible difficulties experienced by overseas students when faced with these demands. Various fundamental issues are raised: to what extent are such courses modified to suit the expectations, existing study modes, or even the actual needs of overseas students; to what extent should they be modified; which factors in course design and composition of the student body affect individual performance; is it indeed a good thing to have large numbers of overseas students on postgraduate courses, and, if so, what admission procedures are most appropriate and what kind of extra help, if any, should the students be receiving. The last point is taken up by all contributors; Fitch and Watt present strong cases for pre-and in-sessional English and study skills courses; Skehan advocates particularly close co-operation between the ESP teacher and the subject specialist on certain courses, even at the design stage; Price outlines a scheme to meet more efficiently actual student needs with the limited resources available on existing in- and pre-sessional courses.

TEAM TEACHING AND THE ROLE OF THE ESP TEACHER

Peter Skehan, University of Birmingham

Introduction

Between 1977 and 1979 the Institute for Local Government Studies at Birmingham University organized a special certificate in economics and related subjects for employees of the Iranian Ministry of Finance on two year release. The students were generally between 25 and 30 years of age and were high school graduates in their own country. At the start of the course they had little theoretical or descriptive knowledge of the component subjects. In addition their level of English proficiency would best be described as lower intermediate. The Certificate aimed to bring these students, in two years, to a level equivalent to that of British students completing the first year of a B. Comm.

Clearly such an ambitious aim was likely to encounter several problems. Three are relevant to this paper. First, the language proficiency of the students on arrival was extremely inadequate for the requirements of university work. Consequently, if course materials were to be readable, they needed considerable modification. Second, the lack of a descriptive base of economic knowledge on the students part was something that had to be remedied, since a movement to more analytic and theoretical approaches was predicated on the existence of such knowledge. Third, the students involved were older and less academically oriented than the average British student. Explicit training was necessary therefore in the role of the student and the development of effective study skills.

The magnitude of these problems was such as to push staff to a radical re-appraisal of the approach to be taken and of the relationship between subject and language teachers. Four relatively novel decisions were taken. First, the traditional distinction between specialist (economics) teaching and language (English) teaching was blurred. Second, it was decided that there would be a language-to-subject teaching progression for each unit, starting with self-directed work, continuing to language classes, and ending with specialist economics teaching. Third, it was decided that the tape component of the published course was too difficult for the students and would have to be simplified (although the visual material could be retained in its original form). Fourth, it was decided to use an audio-visual series (Wilson 1977) of units on economics with a tape-slide (non-text) presentation which covered, amongst other things, the necessary descriptive base. This series was chosen as the foundation for the present course because of its audio-visual approach and also because its general pedagogic approach was thought to be basically correct for our students.

Course Materials

The general approach to each unit will now be described in more detail. The course consisted of eight units, covering such topics as production, costs, economies of scale, demand, supply, price etc. Each unit consisted of six sections in the language-to-subject teaching progression. Section One was an introductory reading which orientated the students towards the topic of the unit. Section Two contained vocabulary items and glosses for words that were thought likely to cause difficulty. Section Three contained exercises which practised the new vocabulary items and also other difficult linguistic features from each unit. Sections One to Three were clearly preparatory material, aiming to put students in a position from which they could effectively study the main input of the unit, which was contained in Sections Four to Six. Section Four consisted of copies of the visuals used with each unit, Section Five a series of comprehension questions, and Section Six the text of the tape that was used in the audio-visual course. Progression through each unit of material was accomplished by means of a series of teaching phases and the unit sections is shown in Fig. 1.

Figure One

Teaching Phase	Unit	Location
1 Student given material. Works through preliminary sections	Sect. 1- Introduction Sect. 2- New Vocab. Sect. 3- Vocabulary and Language Exercises	Private Study at home or in language lab
2 Student listens to tape in laboratory	Sect. 4- Visuals for Unit Sect. 5- Comprehension Questions and Answers	University Self-Access Language Laboratory
3 Student covers material with English teacher.	Sect. 6- Given out at appropriate point during lesson.	English Class (2 x 1 hr)
4 Student attends Tape Slide presentation by Econ. Teacher. Material exploited to teach economics concepts.	Slide Presentation (ie of material already seen in line-drawing form in the visuals)	Economics class

Phase One, it can be seen, required students to work at their own pace, at home or in the laboratory, to complete the 250 word introductory reading, and study the new words that they were to encounter in the unit. Phase Two consisted of more self access work, but this time in the University language laboratory. Ideally students were to deal with a tape whose level of difficulty was such as to stretch them but which was within their compass. Students could listen to the tape as many times as they wished, so points of difficulty could be given special effort and attention. The illustrations from the Audio Learning course were reproduced on [illegible] and reference could be made to these while the tape was playing. Questions were provided for each of the sections of the tape which tried to facilitate comprehension by requiring students to focus on what was important.

After students had covered all the material themselves, Phase Three brought them into class, and into contact with the language teacher. This phase had two aims. It tried to check how much knowledge had been assimilated and where points of difficulty lay. It was also a listening comprehension lesson in which additional questions were asked. Here the teacher tried to develop listening skills both in terms of improved auditory perception and in terms of the ability to identify crucial aspects of the information presented.

The final phase, the fourth in this teaching sequence, took students into class with the economics teacher. The first three phases led up to this fourth and most important stage. Hopefully by this time there remained very few linguistic problems and indeed very few informational problems, in the sense that the factual nature of the text was generally understood. The economics specialist was therefore able to concentrate on the significance of the material, the conceptual analysis deriving from it, and its relationship to other aspects of the microeconomics course. That this level of specialist economics teaching was eventually possible was the main justification for the course. All the other phases and sections aimed at putting the economics teacher in a position from which this sort of teaching was possible. A fuller description of the teaching procedures is provided in Skehan and Henderson (1979).

The Relevance of the Course to Some Issues in ESP

Several issues emerge from the economics course that has just been described. These are first, the role of the ESP teacher and his relationship with specialist teachers; second, the importance of lexis; third, the use of self-access materials; fourth, simplification; and finally, the authenticity of language teaching materials.

The Role of the ESP Teacher

Generally ESP teachers have to take a certain specialist course as 'given' and then design a course that is appropriate for it. The amount of cooperation they receive in the performance of this task is variable; sometimes they enjoy the active interest of the specialists concerned, sometimes there is indifference, and occasionally even a little hostility. However, in each of these cases the frame of reference is not to be modified, and the language teacher occupies a secondary, service role.

The present experience suggests that there may be a few situations in which the ESP teacher can stake a claim as a more equal partner, and exert a more positive influence on the nature of a course. Several pre-conditions must exist before this can be done. The ESP teacher must have more than a superficial expertise in the subject concerned; the overseas students in the course must form a very high proportion, so that there are grounds for modifying courses to suit them; and there must be a favourable disposition on the part of specialist staff to this new role for the ESP teacher, together with a willingness on the part of such staff to accept a re-examination of their traditional role and the placement of the line of demarcation between ESP teaching and subject specialisms.

Several consequences would follow from such a change. First of all the ESP teacher might need to acquire expertise in certain specialist areas. This seems to be what is happening anyway, as many English teachers acquire greater understanding of the hard sciences. Presumably this trend will continue as more and more courses in the (easier) social sciences are designed and as subject specialists are attracted into the English teaching profession. We may reach a stage where ESP teachers are generally expected to have introductory knowledge of two or three subject areas. A second consequence of the change in the ESP-specialist teacher relationship might come at the course planning stage. It is here that pedagogic and linguistic criteria can be discussed so that they complement, indeed, blend with one another. It is here that some subject expertise on the part of the ESP teacher would be helpful as it would enable him to understand what the specialist teacher wants to achieve and would allow a course planning team to divide up the work appropriately.

Thirdly, subject expertise by the ESP teacher and joint course planning might occasionally allow the language class to be the place where some new material is first introduced. Generally this is a dangerous thing to do, but within the context of greater knowledge by the ESP teacher and where there is a linguistic purpose, it may be possible. Certainly there are attractions. One of the problems with some ESP teaching is that students see the English class as peripheral to their needs, dealing with material whose inherent specialist content is far too easy. Students would be quick to accept new information being presented to them by a non-specialist since it would so obviously be learning directly.

The emphasis on ESP expertise at the planning stage could also be important since it might allow the ESP teacher to modify what the subject specialist does. Generally the ESP teacher is in a service role, as has already been mentioned, and he accepts the specialist course as given. Some recent experience at Birmingham has suggested that this rather passive role may be modified. Subject specialist teachers may be partially trained in sensitivity to language use (in terms of form, function and lexis), in the use of feedback, in the types of tests and examinations set and so on, and in making judgements about the type of course or textbook or approach that is most appropriate. Where courses are organized for overseas students principally, it may be more efficient to effect some changes in the specialist teaching than in the 'service' language work. This would make learning easier for the student and also modify the role of the ESP teacher. Clearly this approach would only be appropriate in a restricted number of situations. Where it is suitable, however, it might produce a higher level of pedagogic efficiency. Certainly in general terms an enlarged role for the SELMOUS type teacher is likely to become increasingly important as the confidence of specialist teachers is won, and they realise that co-operation with English teacher colleagues can increase the effectiveness of their own teaching.

Lexis

Until about ten years ago investigations into native language reading comprehension concentrated on the fundamental importance of knowledge of word meanings (Harris 1976). Some researchers (eg Davis 1972) even suggested that knowledge of vocabulary accounts for more than half of the variance in reading comprehension scores. While this figure is likely to over-estimate the importance of lexis it does draw attention to the need to consider such factors. Many current ESP courses do not emphasise vocabulary acquisition enough. Partly, no doubt, this is because even 'specific' course have to be content with some level of generality and so do not have a target base vocabulary. Partly, however, this is a choice which reflects greater interest in discourse, cohesion or notional analyses of language. As a result it is assumed that vocabulary acquisition is not a problem, or that it can easily be handled by other teaching or outside reading.

'Introductory Microeconomics', however, took vocabulary development as a principal theme. There were three main reasons for this changed emphasis. First, the course developed in cumulative fashion, with the comprehension of later units contingent on the understanding of previous ones. Sound knowledge of earlier vocabulary and contexts was therefore essential. Second, it is a problem endemic to the social sciences that words are used in restricted and exact senses which may be different from general use. Rather than leave students to deal with this problem by themselves it was felt more useful to exert careful control over the tuition received on new vocabulary. Finally, one of the linguistic aims of the course was to develop effective listening skills. Fluency in comprehension is disrupted when the listener has to deal with more than a certain proportion of unknown words (Bright and McGregor 1970). When this proportion is exceeded one is not teaching effective comprehension but rather puzzle solving, and listening skills are more likely to be disrupted than enhanced.

Accordingly Introductory Microeconomics' systematically introduced and practised new vocabulary in each unit and also recycled previously learned material in later units. The eight units introduced and practised a total of 450 new words. Three hundred or so were specifically economic in register while the remaining one hundred and fifty were included to aid general comprehension of the tapes although they were not specifically related to the subject. Each unit contained forty to sixty new words. These words were given in an early section to the unit and were followed by exercises which tried to consolidate them. In this way students were equipped with a core micro-economics vocabulary which formed an effective basis for later more independent learning in further specialist courses. As a final point it should be emphasised that vocabulary selection in this case was based on a specific course (Wilson 1977) and on intuitive judgements of what was new and difficult. In the future it may be possible to produce material based not on subjective analyses of individual courses but on more extensive computer based analyses of a much larger corpus in which some attempt is made to achieve a representative sampling of economics texts (Skehan and Broughton, ms).

Self-Access Materials

Until recently the term 'self-access materials' was synonymous with programmed instruction, and indeed this form of learning enjoyed a certain vogue, even in language teaching, particularly in the sixties (Carroll 1963, Howatt 1968). At this time the emphasis was on small steps in the progression through programmes, frequent reinforcement or reward, overt responses linked to immediate knowledge of results, self-pacing, and a general link with behaviourist psychology. Since the sixties such an approach to psychology has lost influence. In addition many practical experiments have shown that most of the variables associated with the Skinnerian approach to learning - self-pacing, feedback, reward etc. are not of critical importance (Richmond 1975). Contemporaneous with this demise of conventional programmed instruction and the associated behaviouristic language learning model has been a renewed interest in congnitive approaches to learning which emphasise the active, hypothesis forming nature of the learning process. The consequence of this for the language teacher is that less interest is given to controlled habit formation eg Marty (1962) and more interest to the provision of quantities of material which can be used by the language learner in whatever way he thinks would be most useful. Such materials are also more suitable for learners at higher levels of sophistication, where the level of instruction is more demanding.

There has been, in other words, a movement away from programmed instruction and towards what might be termed self-access materials (Mead 1979).

Such an approach provides the learner with material that is appropriate in content and level but which he can work at and master on his own. There will be provision for help which will guide the self-learning process and go some way to solving potential difficulties. However the onus will vary much with the student who is expected to devote time, effort, and resourcefulness to the assimilation of the materials.

Such an approach is particularly relevant to the ESP enterprise. ESP teaching is extremely expensive. The successful practitioner must be conversant, to some minimum degree, with a wide range of subjects. He will also probably have to devote a considerable amount of time and resources to the task of identifying specific student needs, researching new content areas, developing pedagogic solutions to specific learning problems and producing language teaching materials. The result is that any ESP teaching, if done properly, is very costly. Consequently methods which can extract the maximum potential from the work undertaken by the ESP specialist are likely to lead to greater efficiency and cost effectiveness. The development of a range of self-access materials would be a step in this direction since they would not be teacher-bound or situation-bound but could function as freely available reference materials.

Self-access materials also have an important role to play in the study habits of overseas students. Many such students have little experience of working independently, of having to organize their work time, and of having to develop appropriate learning strategies for the different types of learning task they are confronted with. It is inadequate to assume that all students will quickly be able to effect the transition from a past history of teacher-directed learning to successful work within a learner-directed context. This even applies in those rare cases where there is provision for a study skills course. A transitional stage between dependence and independence would clearly be an advantage. Self-access materials could provide one possible framework for such a transitional stage. Such an approach would provide some degree of focus, of assigned and fixed texts for the students, but would require flexibility and independent work. The learner would still have to understand and identify the important information, the development of argument etc., but with the availability of some support.

A third advantage of self-access materials is that to the extent that they require both information and concept learning (Gagne 1978) there is the possibility that different students may need to allocate different amounts of time to the same material to achieve the same level of mastery. This was one of the original advantages of Skinnerian P.I. Its relevance for self-access material is equally as great, the more so in that variation in ability, language proficiency, and previous learning amongst overseas students may be greater than that existing amongst native language students.

The first advantage of self-access materials, cost-effectiveness, was not especially operative in the present case, since the self-study part of the microeconomics course was specially prepared for it. This advantage should come in the future if the course is used again, either at Birmingham or elsewhere. Material has been produced which can be used freely by students working on their own. The material will allow such students to function with far less contact with either of these specialists to work independently ie an economics teacher could treat the materials as not requiring any ESP back-up at all (and vice versa).

The second and third advantages are more relevant. Certainly the structured situation requiring students to attend the university language laboratory worked well. Students had a clear idea of what they had to do **in general** - cover the preparatory material and listen to the tape (Phases One to Three) - but there was considerable latitude in the timing, effort, and organization with which they approached the task. They were, in other words, being trained for more independent work and less support later in the course. There was also evidence that some weaker students put in extra effort so that they reached the same point as that attained by more gifted colleagues in a shorter space of time. It has been claimed (Carroll 1965) that time is the most important variable in any model of learning, and that in many cases a given level of attainment is not beyond the capabilities of some students, but that they require more time to reach it. The present experience is consistent with this view. Students were able to devote different amounts of time to arrive at the economics class with a similar understanding of the preparatory material. In this way the weaker students were in a favourable position to benefit from the specialist instruction and the economics teacher could more easily presume a common starting point for his students.

Simplification

The examples of materials taken from Units 2 and 8 (see Appendix 1) make it clear that traditional simplification techniques were used. In particular compound and complex sentences were often broken down into a number of simpler component sentences; there was a great deal of lexical simplification and even omission; and fewer examples were used when the number given in the original was judged to be unnecessarily long. These techniques are, of course, very similar to those used to modify the various series of structural readers (Davies and Widdowson 1974).

Some aspects of the simplification, however, had a different emphasis. First, explicit attempts were made to build in greater repetition and redundancy. Students were to **listen** to the material, so the message being transmitted had to be fairly direct and understandable. Hence the redundancy, which was intended to facilitate and develop the ability to buiild up understanding of an argument on the basis of auditorily presented material. In addition it was sometimes felt necessary to make explicit what was only implicit in the original. Finally where the original seemed difficult to grasp the material was rewritten to make it easier to understand: indeed, simplification of the ideas conveyed was occasionally attempted.

The approach to simplification just described generally produced shorter texts than the original in the first few units of the course, but ones of similar length towards the end. The degree of lexical, syntactic, and conceptual simplification was progressively reduced as the course went on, so that by Unit 8 the modified version was a more direct version of the original. It was, of course, hoped that this progressively closer approximation to the original would facilitate the development of general comprehension skills and transfer to other areas, since students were, in effect, being asked to learn to deal with the nature of argument in economics, and the relationship between economic analysis and real world situations.

Authenticity

ESP teachers have, in the last few years, become concerned with the question of text authenticity - the problem of saying whether a given text is a genuine example of material in a given content area. Three broad approaches have been taken to this problem. The first one is straightforward: an authentic text is an authentic text. In this view excerpts from reputable textbooks, journal articles, papers etc. (which would be used by specialists from the field concerned) qualify as authentic. Equally clearly the classroom strategy for the ESP teacher is to help students to deal with such original sources.

Unfortunately the main shortcoming of this approach is readily apparent: what if students are in fact unable to handle the complexity of such original material? What is the teacher to do in these circumstances? How can he help students to grapple with inherently difficult texts? There is little guidance on this point. A second problem with original texts (Mead 1978, Johns 1979) is that it is not enough for the text itself to be genuine: the entire teaching situation needs to be valid. Thus one can question where the authenticity lies in a situation where an excerpt from original materials is used in a language teaching class. What overall framework does the text relate to? What part does it play in the specialist course? Without such connections to actual specialist teaching and learning the 'authentic' text exists in a vacuum, and consequently cannot be really authentic.

The inability of this first view of authenticity to come up with satisfactory pedagogic answers has led to attempts to describe authenticity in more useful ways. One such approach is that of Mountford (1974). He proposes that a text can be simplified, yet still be authentic provided that the speech acts of the original are retained in the simplified version. (In fact Mountford speaks of **re-creating** the text, rather than simplifying it.) This approach has the advantage that a text can be rendered at varying levels of difficulty - so that the overseas student can progressively master more and more complex text - while at the same time the text involved is still genuine.

There is an analogy with translation here, since the aim of the re-creation is to 'convey' meaning. The essential is retained while the superficial can be modified.

Clearly the flexibility to the teacher provided by this new definition of authenticity is welcome; it allows the ESP teacher to get on with the task of teaching students how to cope with more and more difficult texts. However there are still problems. The 're-creation' approach defines away many problems. It is surely a value judgement to claim that the only vital aspect of a text is the speech acts that it contains. There are many other things besides which are very likely to be essential parts of the original. Text difficulty is the product of many things - propositional organization, knowledge of the overall area, presuppositions, as well as grammatical and lexical complexity. A theory of authenticity has to take all of these factors into account.

The third approach to text authenticity avoids the subjective nature of the re-creation technique of simplification, and it also meets the criticism (Johns 1979) that an authentic text must have an authentic context. It simply states (Sinclair 1979, Morrow 1978) that an authentic text is any text which will actually be used and have some communicative function. Thus Morrow writes:

> 'An authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort.'

This approach avoids many of the shortcomings of the other proposals. Instead of attempting a characterisation of authentic text appeal is made to more objective criteria, standards that are external to the language teaching situation, in fact, and which accept the judgement of the subject specialist.

This approach, however, also has some drawbacks. First, it quite obviously begs the question of defining what authentic text is, since it operates only at the level of **identifying** some texts as authentic. It adds nothing to our understanding of authentic text in itself, and of the relevant dimensions along which text can vary. Most important, it offers no solution to the problem of specifying degrees of authenticity or of being able to regard some texts as more authentic than others. This in turn leads on to the pedagogic question of what intermediate stages help students to attain a level where they can deal with all authentic texts. There are no suggestions as to how the comprehension of authentic texts may be progressively facilitated. Hence to say that authentic texts are those texts which will be used has only limited utility.

Perhaps at this point it would be more useful to speak of appropriateness rather than authenticity. Appropriateness may be considered to be a broader term. Authenticity has mainly revolved around the linguistic features of text. Appropriateness is also concerned with such features, but in addition it involves **pedagogic** suitability and genuineness. For example, let us take the case of an 'O' level text on introductory economics, and a monograph on money supply. Now, it is highly likely that the former will be linguistically simpler than the latter. However a more important difference between them relates to their target audiences. The former will be aimed at readers who possess little knowledge of economics, and will be structured, presumably, so as to promote the acquisition of such knowledge. In addition it will not contain any path-breaking new analyses but will rather attempt to convey concepts that are generally accepted in the content area. The monograph, on the other hand, will probably be more difficult in terms of subject matter and type of argument because it is concerned with complex issues and will probably presuppose considerable background knowledge of the area. It is also, of course, likely to be original, which will further add to the difficulty.

Generally speaking ESP teachers have preferred to concentrate on the issue of linguistic complexity (naturally enough, since this is what they are more familiar with). However, as the earlier section on the role of the ESP teacher has shown, it is not enough to look in from outside, as it were. To do so ignores both the problem of pedagogic appropriateness and also the changing role of the ESP teacher as he becomes more involved in the actual specialist teaching.

The present materials illustrate these points clearly. They were chosen, adapted, and developed through the co-operation of the language teacher and the specialist teacher. The original selection (the audio-learning series) was made because the Wilson course had a broadly suitable structuring of material, together with the appropriate level of presupposition. The simplified materials retained the underlying logic but also ensured that the adapted course would be linguistically appropriate. This approach to course design also means that many of the criticisms of 'inauthentic text' have been avoided. The materials revolve around genuine communicative function, since the economics content of each unit is what the specialist teacher is trying to teach. Johns' related criticism that text in a vacuum cannot be authentic has also been evaded since the texts used are an integral part of the economics course. Finally the problem of developing the ability to cope with progressively more difficult text can also, in principle, be dealt with since extensions of the present materials to more advanced topics in economics would necessarily help students with more difficult texts.

This discussion places the original consideration of authenticity into a different perspective. Clearly few proposals have been made here which provide a description of what authentic text is linguistically; nor have any specific suggestions been made as to how the students' ability to handle progressively more complex text can be developed. What can be seen,

34

though, is that the problem of authenticity becomes less important if the general context of instruction is considered since linguistic complexity is but one aspect of this situation. The materials reported on in this paper illustrate this clearly since they have been the product of a changed and enlarged role for the teacher of English for Special Purposes.

References

BRIGHT, J A and McGREGOR, G P
Teaching English as a Second Language London: Longman 1970

CARROLL, J B
'A Primer of Programmed Instruction in Foreign Language Teaching'. *International Review of Applied Linguistics I* (1963), 115-41

CARROLL, J B
'The Prediction of Success in Intensive Foreign Language Training' in F Glaser (Ed.) *Training, Research, and Education* Pittsburg: Univ. of Pittsburg Press 1965

DAVIES, A and WIDDOWSON, H G
'Reading and Writing' in J P B Allen and S Pit Corder (Eds.) *Edinburgh Course in Applied Linguistics* Vol. 3. London: OUP 1974

DAVIS F B
'Psychometric Research in Comprehension in Reading' in *Reading Research Quarterly* 1972, 7, 628-678

GAGNE R M
The Conditions of Learning 3rd Ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston 1978

HARRIS D P
'Testing Reading Comprehension in ESL/EFL' in E M Anthony and J C Richards (Eds.) *Reading: Insights and Approaches* Singapore: Univ. of Singapore Press 1976

HOWATT A P R
Programmed Learning and the Language Teacher London: Longman 1969

JOHNS T F
The Text and its Message (forthcoming)

MARTY F
Programming a Basic Foreign Language Course: Prospects for Self-Instruction Roanoke, Virginia: Audio-Visual Publications 1972

MEAD R
'Student Needs and the Authenticity of ESP Materials' in C J Kennedy (Ed.) *MALS Journal* 1978

MEAD R
Self-Access Materials (ms, Univ. of Birmingham)

MORROW K
'Authentic Texts and ESP' in S Holden (Ed.) *English for Specific Purposes* Modern English Publications 1977

MOUNTFORD A
'Principles and Procedures for Text Simplification in the Teaching of English for Science and Technology' in *Edutec* Mexico pp.36-43, 1976

RICHMOND W K
Teachers and Machines London: Collins 1965

SINCLAIR J M
'Issues in Current ESP Project Design and Management' in C J Kennedy (Ed.) *MALS Journal* 1978

SKEHAN P and BROUGHTON S J
Computer Assisted Text Analysis and the Identification of Core ESP Vocabularies (ms., Univ. of Birmingham)

SKEHAN P and HENDERSON W
'The Team Teaching of Introductory Economics to Overseas Students' in *Team Teaching* ELT Documents 106

WILSON R
Economics London: Audio-Learning Ltd. 1977

Appendix One

Excerpt from Unit Two - Production

Original

When economists talk or write about production, they are using the word in a much less restricted sense than most people use it in everyday speech. If we talk about people producing something, more likely than not we have in mind some sort of manufacturing process. We accept that cars are produced, as are chairs, tables, and coffee pots. But what about the people who are employed as hairdressers, or as petrol pump attendants or as actors? These are not forms of manufacturing. They are examples of people performing a service by cutting our hair, serving us with petrol, or entertaining us. Are these services a form of production?

To an economist they most certainly are. Any activity which results in the satisfying of a need or want is considered to be a form of production. Economists recognise that people in general value, appreciate, and are prepared to pay for not only the acquisition of goods but also the provision of services. We buy food and clothing, and washing machines and TV sets but we also want streets to be cleaned, dustbins to be emptied, letters to be delivered and we also expect that there will be available doctors to care about our health, lawyers to protect our rights policemen to protect our property, and soldiers, sailors, and airmen to defend our shores.

In other words, as consumers, we consume not only goods but a wide variety of services also.

Modified

When an economist speaks about 'production' he uses the word in a special way. The meaning is a little different from the general way people use the word. Normally when we speak about production we think about making things - cars, tables, and so on. When an economist speaks about production he means more than making things. A nurse or a hairdresser do not make anything, yet for an economist they do produce something.

They do not make anything, but they do provide a service. They are doing what someone wants - looking after sick people, or cutting somebody's hair. Actors and hairdressers and other people like them, satisfy needs and wants.

To an economist anything that satisfies needs or wants is production, so an economist would say that nurses and hairdressers do produce something.

People are willing to pay for goods, such as books, machines, and chairs. They are also willing to pay for services, such as hairdressers, doctors, and lawyers.

People pay for both goods and services. People consume goods and services. Therefore economists consider both goods and services involve production.

Excerpt from Unit Eight - Price

Original

Without more ado, the confectioners persuade the government to set the price of chocolate at $3 for at this price the market for chocolate is in equilibrium. There are no tendencies for either surpluses or shortages to be generated. At a price of $3 producers can sell all that they wish to supply, consumers can purchase all they wish to consume, and the need for confectioners to defy the government and juggle the price disappears.

The price at which this happy state of affairs is reached is known as the equilibrium price. The equilibrium price is the price at which the amount consumers are prepared to consume is equal to the amount that producers are prepared to supply. It's very seldom that markets remain in equilibrium for very long, for the very good reason that consumers' ability and willingness to consume and producers' ability and willingness to produce are subject to rapid and severe fluctuations. As a result of these fluctuations in demand and supply conditions, the price of a good or service may fluctuate widely and rapidly in an attempt to bring the market into equilibrium. In an attempt, that is, to prevent the emergence of either severe shortages or excessive surpluses.

Modified

Now let us suppose that retailers persuade the government to charge $3 a bar. At this price the market is in equilibrium. At this price there are no shortages, and there are no surpluses. Producers can sell all the chocolate that they want to produce, and consumers can buy all the chocolate they want to buy. Retailers are happy to obey the government price. They do not need to set special prices.

The price at which demand and supply are equal is called the equilibrium price. The equilibrium price is the price at which the quantity that producers want to supply is equal to the quantity consumers want to purchase. It is very rare for a market to have an equilibrium price for a long time. The reason for this is simple. The tastes of consumers and the money that they have available do not remain constant. They fluctuate. Similarly the conditions of supply do not remain constant. They also fluctuate. As a result of these fluctuations in demand and supply, the price of goods and services will also fluctuate. Price will fluctuate because it will try to find the equilibrium price. Price will fluctuate because it will try and find a price that will remove surpluses and shortages.

PERFORMANCE OF OVERSEAS POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS: A MANAGEMENT TEACHER'S VIEW

John Watt, University of Aston in Birmingham

Introduction

This paper is not the outcome of an academic study but simply an attempt to put together in a structured way my experiences of overseas students on a postgraduate Masters course in Systems Analysis over the last five years. My aims are twofold: first, to present my experiences and observations to the English teachers here on the assumption that these may be useful in the development of their teaching programmes; second, to try and formulate some questions which I feel all of us here need to address if our higher educational institutions really wish to provide a worthwhile education for overseas students. The theme underlying this paper is that while proficiency in English is a necessary prerequisite it is only part of what needs to be a much broader approach to the induction or acclimatization of these students.

Context

At this point I would like to give the situation I am about to describe some context and definition.

The course is a one-year intensive postgraduate post experience programme in Systems Analysis with a strong orientation towards the management of organizations rather than to computers and quantitative techniques. The nature of the core teaching on systems concepts requires sophisticated philosophical thinking and careful use of language. Much of the work deals with open-ended problem situations. Thus, mechanical proficiency in handling numbers and careful memorisation of material do not provide a safety net.

The overseas students that I refer to in this paper came from the following areas:

SE Asia, India, Africa, Middle East, Greece and Latin America.

We have had a small number of students from North America, Australia and New Zealand, but I have excluded these as they appear to differ little from home students in performance.

The period covered by the paper is the five academic years from October 1973 to September 1978. In that time 110 students attended the course, roughly 20 per year, and of these 110 exactly 50 came into the category that I have defined as overseas.

Performance

Although performance and kinds of difficulties varied somewhat between different national groups, I do not intend to make any differentiation on these grounds, partly because the numbers are too small, partly because all groups exhibited the problem symptoms which I shall shortly describe in some degree, even if the balance differed between groups.

The one unavoidably noticeable indicator of problems is examination performance in this group; only about 25% passed the course without some form of repeat examination. On this course a student may, obviously, pass first time, if he fails in one subject he may retake that one subject in a referred examination, if he fails in more than one subject he must retake all the examinations with or without attendance, or may withdraw from the course. Any failure in a referred or resit examination means that the student must withdraw.

Of the 50 students only 13 (26%) achieved a clear first-time pass.

A further 16 (32%) passed after sitting one referred paper.

A further 7 (14%) passed after a full resit examination.

Eleven students (22%) withdrew because of examination failure.

Three students have yet to take their full resit examination.

At the final count for these five years I expect we will have a drop-out rate of 25% or so - not good but in the circumstances certainly not disastrous. But that to my mind is not the most significant figure. It concerns me that only 26% passed first time and that nearly 50% passed only after some form of repeat examination. Also, underlying these crude percentages, is (a) the question of level of pass, often marginal among those repeating examinations, together with (b) the extra tuition and counselling required by these students.

Classification and Discussion of Problem Areas

I have selected four major areas where the students exhibited problem symptoms indicative of difficulties not entirely connected with straightforward language proficiency:

1 Concepts of the purpose of learning
2 Study approach and skills
3 Content of the course
4 Social and work relationships within the course framework

I do not wish to minimize the importance of proficiency in English - it certainly plays a major role probably affecting nearly every aspect of a student's life here - but I want to leave it on one side so that I may concentrate on other factors which seem to me significant. It may be worth noting too that for 19 of the 50 students English was the medium for at least their university first degree course.

1 Concepts and Purpose of Learning

In this country our ideal ranking of the purposes of learning puts personal self-development first, followed by acquisition of specific and useful career skills and knowledge, and finally the gaining of an appropriate paper qualification. While in practice we deviate somewhat I believe that this particular perception exercises a major influence on our approach to learning.

With the overseas students in question my observations and discussions indicate in a majority of cases a complete inversion of this ranking of purposes.

If personal self-development is placed first then the student is working towards his own objectives in as far as he can define them; he knows what to do and is consistent. But if acquiring a desirable qualification is placed first then the student must try to determine what others wish him to do. I believe this latter approach makes learning with real depth of understanding very difficult, and I think may well underly some of the problem symptoms described under study approach and skills.

Questions:

Do we accept the overseas student's ranking of purpose and attempt to adjust our courses and teaching approach to achieve some compromise?

Do we attempt to bring the overseas student's view closer to ours and if so, how?

Or do we just ignore the whole problem?

2 Study Approach and Skills

Here are a list of symptoms which I think need little elaboration:

There is little or no relation of academic material to personal experience

Much study takes the form of diligent memorization of notes and text material

Many students appear to allocate their study time ineffectively, indicating difficulty in determining priorities

There is constant demand for highly structured directive teaching and clearcut well-defined tasks or problems

When forced to tackle 'soft' or 'open' problems, structuring difficulties quickly appear

Similar structuring problems affect essays and reports - the concept of working to a hypothesis or the more general concepts of purpose are rarely evident

Performance in library searching is frequently poor. Amongst other things there appears to be difficulty in identifying useful material not identified by a limited set of key words

Questions:

Do we need intensive study skills teaching along with English in preparatory courses?

How important is it that we attempt to impart an understanding of western scientific philosophy in such teaching?

3 Content of the Course

Here I have only two observations but both are, I believe, of major significance. Firstly, there appears to be a general acceptance that western methods and techniques are 'good', right, useful. One immediate effect of this is an uncritical approach to ideas given out on the course which inhibits discussion and understanding. Secondly, and perhaps connected, there is little serious attempt to relate the course content to the home country's needs. I cannot recollect being questioned by any student on this matter, and most attempts on my part to provoke discussion have failed to get beyond the most superficial aspects.

Questions:

Do we need to analyse carefully the needs of overseas students especially in relation to home country problems?

What do we really have to offer?

How far can we provide for their needs on 'normal' courses?

Do we need to provide special courses concentrating on the needs of developing countries?

And a vital overall question - why do we want to be in the business of education export?

4 Social and Work Relationships within the Framework of the Course.

An important area but one I was reluctant to tackle since as course tutor my views must be limited and biased. However, to exclude it would be to leave out a major problem area - and one which I must add, extends far beyond the class context given here.

> There is generally overmuch apparent respect accorded to the teacher; this inhibits argument and the development of a critical approach
>
> There is a tendency to become over-dependent on a sympathetic teacher
>
> There is a tendency to work and play in national groups
>
> There is a tendency to limit co-operative work with other students - a kind of hiding the pearls of wisdom which might just put a competitor ahead.
>
> A sizeable minority seem to do nothing but work, eat and sleep
>
> In general, this group of students demand a much larger amount of personal attention from the tutor than do home students
>
> Questions:
>
> What are the course tutor's and subject teacher's responsibilities here?
>
> How can the institution provide appropriate support?

Suggested Lines of Action

I did say that I was setting out to ask questions rather than provide answers, but in thinking about and writing this paper three general lines of action emerged which I felt worth putting forward:

> a It seems absolutely clear that substantial preparatory courses are required for most if not all of these students - and by substantial I am thinking of six months or a year, rather than six weeks. These courses must contain major elements devoted to study skills and to social adaptation as well as the English Language.

b The complementary and equally necessary need on our side of the Higher Education system is improved understanding both on the part of teachers and administrators. I do not see some series of semi-compulsory courses being practicable. But perhaps extensive involvement of staff in the preparatory courses referred to above might provide a useful vehicle?

c Last, but in truth, really the first step - we need clear consistent policies setting out our institutional and national aims and giving guidance on the means of pursuing them.

EXPERIENCES OF A POSTGRADUATE PHYSICS COURSE TUTOR WITH OVERSEAS STUDENTS

Keith Fitch, University of Aston in Birmingham

Introduction

When I was invited to present a paper to this Seminar I did wonder if my qualifications were entirely suitable, particularly as this Seminar is largely concerned with the special problems of the English language for overseas students.

I was then reminded of my early school-days when I took the NUJMB School Certificate, when it was necessary to obtain a number of subjects including mathematics and English language. I knew that I would have no trouble with the mathematics, and I was very pleased to obtain a pass in English. My claim today, therefore, is that I am almost certainly the least qualified participant at this seminar in English language, and thus have some sympathy with overseas students in this respect!

Consequently, I think it appropriate that I do not devote a large proportion of the time to this aspect of my work as a course tutor. I propose, in the first instance, to review my experience as a tutor for a course which, at present, includes a large proportion of overseas students, and then make some suggestions which I think are important for the future.

Firstly, I will briefly explain the nature of our MSc course which is in Physical Methods of Analysis. This is a rather general course covering a range of subjects but essentially dealing with the use of various analytical techniques such as electron microscopy and x-ray diffraction, together with basic techniques such as vacuum physics and computing. I believe that the general nature of the course is one reason why it is popular with overseas students.

In principle, it is a one-year course, although some students are required to extend this to about eighteen months if, for example, they are given permission by the Board of Examiners to repeat the written examinations or the project. In practice, we also use this course as a filter for prospective PhD students and only those who do well in the MSc course are permitted to register for a higher degree by research.

The MSc course consists essentially of three parts - lectures, tutorials and seminars representing 50% of the course, practical work and project each representing a further 25%.

Indeed, by the end of the second term, students have completed 75% of the formal work including the lectures and laboratory periods and at the beginning of the third term they sit their written examinations. During the remaining part of the course, which is 3½ months, the students undertake a small research project.

Assessment

In the process of assessment students must satisfy the examiners in all the three areas mentioned previously, but like any other examining board it is not surprising that a slight weakness in one area may be compensated for by a good performance in another.

In the laboratory work we adopt a system of continuous assessment. The students attend five laboratories, all of which are related to the lectures, but naturally all the sophisticated techniques referred to in lectures are not available in our own department. In the laboratory, members of staff are asked to assess the students in two ways, firstly their general impression of the student's ability at the actual experimental work and secondly their ability to record their results in a 'log book' in just the same way as any practising physicist.

This part of the course is very revealing and often shows how ill-prepared overseas students are in this area. This is presumably due to their own lack of experimental work which they do not receive in their first degree in the same way as our own undergraduates.

As it is continuous assessment the students are at each stage aware of their performance when they are given a grade in a broad classification of A, B, C, D, E, F, where F is a failure. In our standards we regard C as being quite a good performance, although students receiving this grade believe this to be low compared with their earlier experience overseas.

It soon became obvious that students from overseas did not have the experience of our own students in the traditional English examination system. Therefore, during the first two terms of the course we hold a number of short practice tests. The marks obtained in these tests do not contribute to the final assessment but the scripts are returned to the students with appropriate comments from the tutor and we believe that this is helpful for them in preparation for their final examinations.

In the final examinations which are held in April or May, the students sit four papers and as soon as possible after the marking is completed and moderated by the external examiner, students then have an oral examination and at this point in the course they are informed of the decision of the Board of Examiners of their progress to date. The students are then put in one of four categories:

1 Pass in Laboratory and written examinations.

2 Pass in Laboratory but have only passed in three papers but are permitted to take a referred paper in September.

3 Pass in laboratory but fail in more than one written paper, but are permitted to proceed with their projects and resit all the examination papers in the following May, providing their project is satisfactory.

4 Advised to leave the course.

All students will already have had some element of choice in selecting their project and during the next 3½ months they are expected, under supervision, to complete their project including a short dissertation to be presented by the beginning of September.

Naturally, the remarks made about the course structure apply to all students and are not specific to overseas students, but now I intend to look at some of the problems specifically related to overseas students.

Admissions Procedure and Selection

Generally those students seriously considered for a place in October in any one year, are likely to have already obtained their degree before the preceding October. Those qualifying afterwards would probably be advised to apply for the following year, but approximately 80% of offers for a place on the course are made before March prior to the October admission. The other 20% are made up of very good late applicants and a few who have possibly been unsuccessful or dissatisfied with another MSc course in the UK.

It has been possible to interview a significant percentage of our overseas students and this gives us a very good idea, not only of their academic preparation in Physics, but also direct experience of their spoken English language. Although we obviously regard their ability in the written language as being important, our impression is that the real problems arise with those students who, at the beginning of the course, are weak in the spoken language, which is obviously important in the earlier lectures and tutorials.

In making selection we strongly favour those students with government or University financial support, although some students are privately financed and then we rely on our own knowledge of the particular university and personal contact that we may have with their tutors overseas. We are not often influenced by references from overseas as all those we receive are usually good or very good.

Most of our overseas students have been from the middle east countries, particularly Iran and Iraq, but we have had some very good students from, for example, Venezuela and Greece, but our experience of those from some far eastern countries has been somewhat unfortunate.

The real problem is in judging the student numbers. Many accept our offer and for various unknown reasons never register on the course. Thus, we continually have to accept more students than we require and hope that our experience is good enough to arrive at the planned numbers on the course. Even now after several years of experience we expect to offer places to about 30 students if we are to realise our planned numbers of 15 for 1979/80. This is a very real and worrying problem and is no doubt related to the fact that we have no postgraduate equivalent of the UCCA system for undergraduates.

English Language

This is, of course, another problem and in my own view the only satisfactory case is when we are able to interview the students before offering them a place.

As course tutors we at Aston are expected to obtain evidence of the proficiency of overseas students in English and attempt to do so by means of the BCDT or TOEFL tests. As a result of this test we then should be able to decide if the student is adequately prepared in English or would benefit from attending the pre-sessional course in study skills organized by our own English Language Department for August and September.

However, because of the apparent difficulty of the students taking any test and the obvious difficulty in the time scale, we sometimes admit students without any formal test and then encourage them to attend the study skills course. Unfortunately, if we decided to wait for the test results for all students we would certainly lose some of the best students. In fact, my experience of BCDT or TOEFL test scores is that frequently those with reasonable scores are very poor at the spoken language! Indeed, this is not surprising to me as a Physicist, because then the small differential in score between a good and bad performance appears to be statistically insignificant. Of course this may very well be due to my lack of knowledge of the testing system but does seem to support my original argument.

Fortunately, in our University we have an excellent back-up facility from our English Language Department for continuous tuition during the important early weeks of the course for those students who do not attend the pre-sessional courses in English or having attended still need further tuition.

What I believe is essential from any such courses is firstly to improve the spoken language and then to concentrate on the written aspect in which emphasis is placed on material relevant to the discipline of the course being studied. A particular area here is concerned with circumstances in which, despite my efforts, I seem unable to persuade the students to spend time reading and planning their answers to examination questions. Frequently they produce quite a reasonable essay or account, but which is not an answer to the original question.

This is a clear weakness in technique common to many overseas students and something which I hope will be included in future English Study Skills courses.

Teaching methods

Methods of teaching on this course vary considerably and do present further problems which must be common to all courses containing overseas students.

Some of my colleagues will, perhaps rightly, state that these students are taking an MSc in a British University and why should we make allowances? I am pleased to say that this is rather an extreme point of view and we do make considerable effort to compromise in this respect. I know that in examinations a poorly written answer to an examination question which contains relevant information and shows the necessary depth of understanding will still receive good marks.

Many lecturers will give typed notes which are supplemented in the lecture. This is very helpful in the early weeks for those students who cannot follow the verbal lecture completely. Other colleagues set work for the students to prepare a paper which they then present to the group for discussion.

Overseas students do also seem to have rather more than the usual number of 'personal' problems and we try to help with these by allocation of a personal tutor to each student and any serious problems are then referred to the course tutor.

I have already stated that we also help by setting practice examinations throughout the course, so despite my earlier comments, considerable effort is being made for our overseas students.

Conclusions

I would now like to conclude with a few remarks, some of which are rather speculative.

It is now clear that our own universities have benefited from the presence of overseas students during the last decade in particular. Indeed, perhaps some courses would not have been able to continue without them.

What then of the future? How long will it be before the overseas student demand declines? For the next few years I believe this will not be a problem, although there is some evidence that overseas governments and universities are demanding from us, quite rightly, different and perhaps more specialised courses.

Why then is the government so concerned with the number of overseas students? Naturally, I would fully support any restriction where there was evidence that our own graduates are unable to obtain places on postgraduate courses in the UK. This is not, as is often suggested in the popular press, the case and I think we should continue in roughly the same way and make full use of our high quality investment in equipment, buildings and staff in our universities. Surely such exchange is not only good for this country in improving better understanding of our different cultures and exchanging ideas of our science and technology, but is also valuable to us as one of our invisible earnings, so much relied upon in our calculation of the balance of payments. Should we be any more concerned at having an 'Education industry' any more than say a 'Tourist industry'?

Finally, if we are to continue accepting a significant number of postgraduate students from overseas, we really need to set up some process equivalent to our 'UCCA' system in order to obtain the planned numbers on each course.

THE STRUCTURE OF POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT COURSES IN ENGINEERING: some implications for language course design

Janet Price, University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Introduction

This research project has developed from a need we have felt at Newcastle to specify much more exactly what the linguistic demands made on different students are. We have divided the field up into 4 faculties which have most of the overseas students at Newcastle, namely Agriculture, Engineering, Medicine and Science. Success in such a project depends very much upon the co-operation of colleagues in other departments and we are extremely fortunate in this respect. Our information comes from colleagues in the departments concerned, from departmental brochures and handouts and from the results of a questionnaire from students. My preliminary findings which I present here are based on the first two sources only. What I think will be interesting in the student questionnaires when they are analysed is the extent to which students interpret their tasks differently from their tutors. There is some evidence to suggest already that students operate very differently from the way academic staff believe. They may get priorities confused and waste time on tasks not considered important by their lecturers.

We decided to concentrate on analysing taught courses at postgraduate level since by far the greatest number of overseas students are on such courses. A student who is doing research proper seems to be more in control of his own programme, of his timing, his daily organization and less subject to external constraints. Even though his language may not be particularly good, he may more easily cope than his taught course counterpart. It may be that he is able to transfer his study habits wholesale to the British situation with very little modification.

These preliminary findings refer only to the Faculty of Engineering, and the courses have been analysed so far under 5 heads, namely, numbers, relationship between levels, class contact, reading and assessment. However, some background is necessary to put the whole project into perspective.

Background

It is relevant at this stage to consider the language testing situation at Newcastle. It is compulsory for all overseas postgraduates in their first year to take a language test before registration. As a result of this test, certain provisions are made for language improvement. If you look at Table 1.1.A you will see that the number of postgraduates who have actually taken the test this year is 147, out of which total, approximately a third is in the Engineering Faculty. The proportion of taught course to research people is significant and suggests that we are justified in the first instance in analysing taught courses (see Tables 1.1.B and 1.2)

TABLE 1.1 Numbers tested 78/79

147 52	postgraduates undergraduates
199	total

A. **University Numbers**

44 8	Taught course Research
52	total

B. **Engineering Numbers**

TABLE 1.2 Departmental Distribution of Postgraduates in Engineering

Department	Total No. tested	Total No. in research	Total No. in Courses
CHEMICAL	3	1	7
CIVIL	28	2	26
ELECTRICAL	5	2	3
ENGINEERING MATHS	0	0	0
MARINE TECHNOLOGY	8	2	6
MECHANICAL	1	0	1
METALLURGY	1	1	0
MINING	1	0	1
Total	52	8	44

Decisions about which students require tuition are generally taken purely on the results of the *ELBA test. The cut-off point at Newcastle is 65% both for Part I (Listening skills) and for Part II (Reading skills, Vocabulary and Grammar). In other words, what we are saying is that the student is lacking in certain general linguistic areas and these areas have to be made good, irrespective of what his particular study situation requires him to make good. We are in fact making certain assumptions about what we consider to be important. It seems reasonable to check whether we are right in making those assumptions by looking at precisely what linguistic demands are being made. One thing is certain, that if one or two areas of language, (which in fact is the case with lecture comprehension in Engineering), are very much more crucial than others, then more time has to be devoted to them and what is more, a greater standard of proficiency expected. In other words, if we are only training those students with a score of under 65% which may be interpreted as less than 65% efficiency in listening skills, then we are perhaps neglecting a proportion of those who **need** to be taught to listen more efficiently. After all, are we expecting too much of the student, if we ask him to understand 75% of what he hears? If we were to raise our cut-off point to 75% in Part I skills we would then pick up more than twice as many students for in-session language courses (see Table 1.3). This may be one of the implications of the analysis for Newcastle.

---

* English Language Battery, devised by Elisabeth Ingram, University of Edinburgh

Numbers

One factor which may affect the kind of study tasks being demanded, the length of time spent on them, the kind of departmental organization of tasks may be the proportion of native speakers to non-native speakers, whether native speakers occupy a dominant role or not. What may be affected in particular is the amount of help the overseas student can expect to get from his native peers, from his supervisors, the degree of tolerance towards problems by the department, the extent to which exercises and classes are modified because of a heavy weighting of overseas students, the amount of repetition and revision which will be incorporated into the programme and so on. One would expect there to be a greater deviation from any norm of study habits on the courses dominated by non-native speakers and a greater conformity to native speaker patterns of study and achievement, where the native speaker is dominant.

Another factor which may affect the rate and quality of development is whether the group is dominated by one particular country or mother tongue, where any majority might be in a position to sway the emphasis of the programme to suit their own particular study modes, linguistic level, expectations or whatever. I should say at this point that I am not standing in judgement on departments where there is a predominance of students from one country, but rather I am raising the issues as points of interest to the language teacher and educationalist.

A further point for consideration may be the proportion of those non-native speakers who have completed first degrees in Britain. Proficient non-natives may be far more understanding and helpful towards new non-native speakers than natives might be. I have not included this feature in my analysis since it has only just emerged. In discussion with Chemical Engineering, for example, it transpires that half of the numbers are in this category and might therefore offset the apparent disadvantage of such a heavy weighting of overseas students (see Table 2.1).

TABLE 1.3 Departmental scores of those on taught courses

				No. scoring under 65%		No. scoring under 75%	
Department				I	II	I	II
CHEMICAL		M.Sc.	5	1	2	3	3
(7)		Dip.	2	1	2	1	2
		TOTAL		2	4	4	5
CIVIL	Public Health	M.Sc.	4	2	1	3	3
(26)		Dip.	8	0	3	6	7
	Soil Mechanics	M.Sc.	4	2	2	3	3
	Water Resources	M.Sc.	4	1	0	2	3
	Transport	M.Sc.	1	1	1	1	1
		Dip.	1	1	1	1	1
	Eng. Hydrology	M.Sc.	2	0	1	2	1
		Dip.	1	1	1	1	1
	Structures	Dip.	1	1	1	1	1
		TOTAL		9	11	20	21
ELECTRICAL							
(3)		M.Sc.	1	0	1	1	1
		Dip.	2	1	1	2	1
		TOTAL		1	2	3	2
ENGINEERING MATHS							
MARINE TECHNOLOGY (6)							
	Marine Eng.	M.Sc.	1	0	1	0	1
		Dip.	2	0	2	2	2
	Naval Arch.	Cert.	3	2	3	3	3
		TOTAL		2	6	5	6
MECHANICAL (1)							
		M.Sc.	1	0	1	1	1
		TOTAL		0	1	1	1
METALLURGY							
MINING							
(1)		M.Sc.	1	1	1	1	1
		TOTAL		1	1	1	1
Grand total (44)				15	25	34	36

TABLE 2.1 CHEMICAL

2.1.1. Research : 19
2.1.2. Course : 14

Course	Total	Non-Native Speakers
M.Sc.	12	1 Iraq 1 Greece 1 Malaysia 3 Turkey 1 Algeria 1 Jordan 1 India 1 Pakistan 10 Total
Dip.	2	1 Turkey 1 Iran 2 Total

Another feature which I have not yet analysed and which may be of interest is the proportion of foreign language to second language speakers. This will make a difference not only to the kind of language being used and generated but may also have a bearing on attitudes towards study.

In examining numbers more closely, we can see that broadly speaking Chemical, Electrical (see Table 2.3) and Mechanical (see Table 2.5) have a preponderance of non-native speakers; in Water Resources, Public Health (see Table 2.2) and Naval Architecture (see Table 2.4) just over half of the group are from overseas, which leaves Hydrology, Transport (see Table 2.2) and Mining (see Table 2.6) with a third or less. One might deduce from this that those overseas students in the first category were more able to 'manipulate' the programme, to influence things to go their way whereas in the last category, there would be more pressures upon them to adapt their approach, to conform to the established norm and hence ultimately to gain a level of achievement much closer to that of the native speaker.

A further point which may affect the rate and quality of progress is the size of the group. A larger group may tend to be more inward-looking whereas with small numbers, such as Mechanical, there may be more tendency to communicate with non-course people, which may be very beneficial. The proportion of research people to course people is important in this respect too, since if there is a substantial number of research people, they could form a useful source of expert 'non-staff' opinion and support, to whom students might more easily turn for help. In many instances of course this help is formalised, since research people are often responsible for practical sessions and laboratories. It may be nothing more than idle speculation of course, but it seems reasonable to suggest that the greater the number of sources of information available, the greater the understanding. If we look at Chemical, Electrical, Mechanical and Mining, there are considerably more research people than taught course people. In both Civil and Naval Architecture, there are fewer, with Transport and Naval having a ratio of 1:2 in favour of course and Water Resources and Public Health having a ratio of 2:3.

TABLE 2.2 CIVIL

2.2.1 Research : 12 (Water Resources + Hydrology)
14 (Public Health)
4 (Transport)

2.2.2 Course : 46

Course		Total	Non-Native Speakers
Water Resources	M. Sc.	9	2 France 1 Venezuela 1 Greece 1 Nigeria 5 TOTAL
Hydrology	M. Sc.	8	1 Kashmir 1 Pakistan 2 TOTAL
	Dip	1	1 Sierra Leone 1 TOTAL
Public Health	M. Sc.	15	1 Colombia 1 Nigeria 1 Mauritius 1 Libya 1 Thailand 1 Singapore 1 Sri Lanka 1 Nepal 8 TOTAL
	Dip.	6	1 Ghana 1 Colombia 1 Brazil 2 Nepal 5 TOTAL
Transport	M. Sc.	5	1 Malaysia 1 TOTAL
	Dip.	2	1 Burma 1 TOTAL

TABLE 2.3 ELECTRICAL

2.3.1 Research : 30
2.3.2 Course : 9

Course	Total	Non-Native Speakers
M. Sc.	4	2 Iraq 1 Jordan 3 TOTAL
Dip.	5	1 Iraq 1 Iran 1 Sudan 1 Malaysia 4 TOTAL

TABLE 2.4 MARINE TECHNOLOGY

2.4.2 Research : 6
2.4.2 Course : 13

Course		Total	Non-Native Speakers
Naval Architecture	M. Sc.	7	1 Singapore 2 Venezuela 1 Greece 4 TOTAL
	Dip.	2	1 Libya 1 TOTAL
	Cert.	4	1 Belgium 1 Iran 1 Thailand 3 TOTAL

TABLE 2.5 MECHANICAL

2.5.1 Research : 11
2.5.2 Course : 4

Course	Total	Non-Native Speakers
M. Sc.	4	1 France 2 Greece 3 TOTAL

TABLE 2.6 MINING

2.6.1 Research : 24
2.6.2 Course : 16

Course	Total	Non-Native Speakers
M. Sc.	16	1 Venezuela 1 Peru 1 Greece 1 Zambia 1 Zimbabwe 1 Malaysia 6 TOTAL

Relationship between levels

Here I am concerned with the degree of flexibility between levels. In other words, to see to what extent a second chance exists of either moving up or moving down.

Where a student has been selected for a diploma but has the chance to prove in a term that he can cope with an MSc, he is obviously highly motivated to try and feels he is being given a fair opportunity. Members of staff may feel happier with this sort of 'staggered selection process'. As a general rule, this opportunity exists in all divisions in Civil Engineering (see Table 3.1) with the exception of Water Resources. It is a realistic goal, since the courses run so closely together that very little need be made up. This year for example, in Public Health, 10 MSc and 11 Dip. at the beginning of the year have become 15 and 6 respectively.

Conversely, if a student fails to measure up to MSc standard which will be obvious on his failing the examination after two terms, then he may transfer to the Diploma. This ensures at least that he does not leave without a qualification, supposing that his level is sufficient for the Diploma. This tends to happen predominantly in Chemical (see Table 3.2) and Civil.

However, it is worth mentioning that the Diploma seems to have considerable standing in its own right today in Chemical, although it was initially conceived as an escape route. In Naval Architecture (see Table 3.3) and Mining (see Table 3.4) there is a recognised two year programme. In the case of Naval Architecture, where there is any doubt at all, a student will take the Diploma as a prerequisite for the MSc. Mining is slightly different in that there is no diploma but a student may take it over two years with Year 1 being equivalent to Final Year Honours. Under these circumstances a student has to be prepared to commit himself for two years but one can argue that he is presented with a realistic picture of his situation, that he is not forced to follow a line of action in twelve months which is really beyond his capabilities. Time is a crucial factor and may not simply make the difference between a pass and a fail, but between a simple pass and a good pass. This matter of underachievement in overseas students is an important one and one which I shall raise again later.

TABLE 3.1 CIVIL

Public Health	Dip. for those not thought good enough initially, but strong chance to transfer at Xmas, if modular exams passed . . close link bet. M.Sc. + Dip. programme eg originally 10 (M.Sc.)/11 (Dip) this year has become 15(M.Sc.)/6 (Dip). Failed Dip. student may get Cert. Cert. - not necessary to be a graduate ie could be a non-engineer needing background information on water. 1 student every 2 years.
Water Resources	No Dip. . . Failed M. Sc. student has no second chance.
Hydrology	Good Dip. student can transfer to M. Sc. at Xmas . . Term 1 is crucial - close link between 2 programmes. No transfer from M. Sc. to Dip. until M. Sc. written exam failed. Overseas students put on M. Sc. course immediately if (1) from good university (2) have good academic performance (3) have practical experience.
Transport	Dip. course covers fundamentals of land transport and is designed to be as flexible as possible so as to meet requirements of applicants with differing backgrounds. M. Sc. students who fail written exams may transfer to Dip. A departmental certificate course is also available. The certificate could be offered to those who fail the Dip.

TABLE 3.2 CHEMICAL

	Dip. = 'watered-down' M. Sc. - introduced originally to cater for those M. Sc. students with difficulties. Now it is a course in its own right for those not considered capable of M. Sc. work ∵ (1) they have inadequate theoretical background (2) inadequate language. 2 - way transfer is possible during academic year. Successful Dip. students can subsequently enrol for a 2nd year on M. Sc. course

TABLE 3.3 MARINE

Naval Architecture	Dip. = 'light-weight' M. Sc. for those less talented or with less time available. Cert. is desigend for graduates on a conversion course eg Mech. Eng. with a future marine interest. If previous qualification + background is OK, M. Sc. in 1 year. If any doubt, take Diploma M. Sc. in 2 years (4/5 annually do 2 year programme, with 20% dropout after 1st year).

TABLE 3.4 MINING

No Dip. - but if it is felt that an overseas student is M. Sc. material but not ready for 1 year course, can take it in 2 years, when Year 1 - Final Year Hons.

TABLE 3.5 ELECTRICAL

Dip.= virtually Final Year Honours. For non-electrical graduates or overseas electrical graduates.
Cert. is offered departmentally to those who fail Dip. if deserved.

TABLE 3.6 MECHANICAL

Has been no Dip. student for 2 years.
No certificate offered.

Departmental certificates may be offered in the event of failure at Diploma level and at least the student will leave with a piece of paper. One problem for the student is that this may not be recognised in his country where there are tremendous pressures to get Master and Doctor degrees.

Where these pressures can be lessened and where opportunities exist for transfer between courses, then the student may be more relaxed in study and consequently a better performer.

Class contact

The range in class contact time in the faculty is considerable. At MSc level the range is from 240 hours in Chemical (see Table 4.1) which averages out at 12 hours per week to 420 hours in Mining (see Table 4.2) which averages out at 21 hours. The pattern is the same for all MSc courses except for Naval Architecture (see Table 4.3), that is, there is no formal class contact after Easter. The first two terms' work is examined at the beginning of the third term and then the project is covered in the next six months. This means that there is a relatively heavy concentration of lectures, labs and practical sessions at the beginning of the academic year so that a student needs to be a proficient listener and note-taker from the very beginning.

TABLE 4.1 CHEMICAL

Course	No. of Hours	Comments
M.Sc.	180 (3 x 60hrs per major) 60 (2 x 30hrs per major) 240 TOTAL over 2 terms	Major option - 40 hrs lect. +20hrs. tutorials/practical sessions. Minor options - 20 hrs. lectures + 10 hours tutorials. Small classes mostly ∴ equivalent to seminar ∴ feedback possible + discussion encouraged.

TABLE 4.2 MINING

Course	No. of Hours	Comments
M.Sc.	180 (3 x 60hrs per major) 60 (3 x 20hrs per minor) 180 (3 x 60hrs practical per major) 420 TOTAL over 2 terms	3 minor options taught in other departments. Practical work includes 1. lab work 2. field work 3. design exercises. Also 10 industrial visits per year.

TABLE 4.3 MARINE

Course	No. of Hours	Comments
Naval Architecture		
M.Sc.	180 (3 x 60hrs per major) 40 (2 x 20hrs per minor) 60 (3 x 20 practical classes per major) 280 TOTAL over 22 weeks	Lectures are informal dialogue - discussion + feedback - topic introduced + ideas worked through. Important to talk about what is not written about. Most of the information has to be conveyed via lectures. Also 1 seminar per term per major option - student has to present information/solve problem. Field work in summer related to project.
Dip.	120 (2 x 60hrs per major) 20 (1 x 20hrs per minor) 140 TOTAL over 22 weeks	Lectures are part of the M. Sc. programme.

Lecture types vary of course. One factor which affects the kind of lecture which takes place may be the size of the group. Classes are relatively small, as has been seen in Section 2, but lectures may be attended by those from other departments, especially in minor options, thus making discussion and 'seminar type' atmosphere less possible. In Chemical, lectures are mostly small classes so a student can more easily ask questions and offer comments. The same is true in Water Resources and Hydrology (see Table 4.5) where approximately a third of all the lectures are taken by the small group alone and in Electrical (see Table 4.4) where for all major options there is a small group only.

TABLE 4.4 ELECTRICAL

Course	No. of Hours	Comments
M.Sc.	180 (3 x 60hrs per major) 60 (2 x 30hrs per minor) 240 TOTAL over 2 terms	This includes tutorial time for major option. No tutorials for minor options. 25% lecture time for major option - discussion/problem-solving ∴ these lectures - practical sessions. Also major option, small M. Sc. group only ∴ equivalent to tutorial. Minor options - larger mixed groups.
Dip.	240 (5 x 48 hrs over 24 weeks)	These lectures are shared with Final Year Home ∴ large groups.

TABLE 4.5 CIVIL

Course	No. of Hours	Comments
Public Health M. Sc.	180 (3 x 60hrs per major) 60 (2 x 30hrs per minor) 120 (3 x 40 labs per major) 30 (3 x 10 tutorials per major) 390 TOTAL over 2 terms	Lectures = '1-way transmission exercise This year fortunate ∵ experienced students - more active participation. Basically a conversion course for other first degrees ∴ heavy information load in lectures + handouts to supplement. 20 students in tutorial - problem outlined and then solved practically.
Dip.	120 (3 x 40hrs per major) 40 (2 x 20hrs per minor) 90 (3 x 30 labs per major) 30 (3 x 10 tutorials per major) 280 TOTAL over 2 terms	slower pace than M. Sc./general modification overall, though same programme shared.
Water Resources M. Sc.	235 (Lectures) 85 (Tutorials) 85 (Labs/fieldwork) 405 TOTAL over 2 terms	Dip. + M. Sc. follow same programme of lectures + tutorials. Difference lies in stringency of exams and dissertation level. 1/3 all lectures taken by small M. Sc. group alone; 2/3 with others from other departments. ∴ 1/3 equivalent to seminar situation.
Hydrology M. Sc.	185 (Lectures) 93 (Tutorials) 55 (Labs/fieldwork) 333 TOTAL over 2 terms	12/15 students in tutorials. If larger: 2 staff allotted. 4/5 students in lab. per supervisor. Both labs + tutorials directly related to lecture programme.
Transport M. Sc.	150 (3 x 5hrs average per major) 40 (2 x 20hrs per minor) 100 (5 x 20hrs on average labs/practical) 290 TOTAL over 2 terms	Options very considerably in time devoted to lectures/labs/practicals.

Another factor which will affect the rate of progress is, as I mentioned earlier, the student's first degree. This will colour his attitude towards the lecture, which he may see as the opportunity of taking down every word of the lecturer. Clearly where the MSc course is really a conversion course for non-specialists, as is mostly the case in Public Health (see Table 4.5) then there will be a heavy information load and less opportunity to treat the lecture situation as a dialogue.

A further point to be considered in this respect, is the rate at which the subject is developing. It seems that such is the speed with which new ideas and discoveries are made in Engineering, that it is often impossible to refer to other sources of information outside the lecture room, such as books, as is usually the case in Arts subjects, so that the lecturer inevitably becomes the sole source of knowledge where new ideas are presented and on-going research explained.

Where these last two conditions obtain there is clearly considerable strain on the student who cannot afford not to concentrate for the whole period. This point has been made particularly strongly in Naval Architecture where it is considered crucial to have time to talk about what is not written about. To alleviate this strain, allowances may be made to have discussion built into the so-called 'lecture' time as in Electrical where 25% of lecture time is actually discussion or problem-solving or in Chemical where there is half as much discussion as lecture. Alternatively, practical sessions and tutorials are actually in excess of the lecture load, as in Mining and all divisions in Civil which accounts for the considerable differences in class contact time already mentioned.

Generally speaking then, there is a fairly heavy lecture load in Engineering, a fact often regretted by our colleagues there who feel however that the lecture happens to be the most efficient way of imparting the information. Tutorials tend to be sessions where small groups work through a sheet of problems and lab periods to be the place where practical assignments are carried out. The language then being used is of a mathematical nature and may in fact be virtually non-existent.

As far as the language teacher is concerned, lecture comprehension and note-taking and an ability to ask questions are essential skills. Students are very rarely asked to deliver a paper or to articulate publicly. They may prepare the answer to a problem and work through that on the board in a tutorial, as is stated in Naval Architecture but very little formal provision is made for this. Where it happens, it may develop rather out of the teaching style of the lecturer concerned than because of any formal requirement. In Public Health, students are asked to talk for about 20 minutes on their project to their peers. The aim is two-fold - firstly, let all students see what others are doing, secondly help crystallise thoughts.

In terms of satisfying university requirements then, a student could get by without opening his mouth. There are obvious implications here for the language teacher, as indeed there are throughout the analysis. The information helps us to establish priorities but we would be foolish to ignore oral skills totally since we are concerned to 'educate' in the fullest sense and a more 'active' student will eventually make for a more 'active' course.

Where there is field work and industrial visits, there may be a need for students to communicate with non-academics and certainly in the laboratory in practical sessions they will have to be able to express themselves to technical staff. These exercises therefore require a need for non-technical 'general' language. In Mining, students have a minimum of one week in an industrial environment and they will obviously benefit far less if they cannot communicate properly.

Even where there are oral examinations (as will be seen in section 6), these are not central to the course, emphasis being on the subject matter in any case, rather than on the manner in which it is conveyed. The oral exam may become crucial where it may be a last chance for a student to justify what he has written but as with the situation in tutorials there is considerable prediction going on on the part of the listeners and there exists therefore a high level of tolerance of linguistic deviance.

TABLE 4.6 MECHANICAL

Course	No. of Hours	Comments
M. Sc.	40 (1 major option) 60 (1 major option) 60 (3 x 20hrs per minor) 60 (practical classes for 1 minor option) 220 TOTAL over 2 terms	Lecture courses include tutorials and practical classes

Reading

In general what emerges from a consideration of the reading activity is that it is very secondary. Chemical (see Table 5.1), Naval Architecture (see Table 5.2) and Mechanical (see Table 5.3) put most stress on lectures saying that it is very difficult to recommend set text books. It is generally acknowledged in Engineering that a student with good lecture notes will probably pass his examinations without reading. In Electrical (see Table 5.4) it might be possible to pass the examination but certainly not the project and clearly if important weighting is given to the project then a student must get other views apart from his own and his lecturers'. However, by and large, under these circumstances, a student is reading in his own time, less against the clock than in the first two terms and should be more highly motivated since he has presumably chosen his project in an area of particular interest to himself.

The nature of the reading material is much more likely to be offprints and short articles than it is to be heavy texts. These may be easy or difficult depending on the writer's style but there may be a technique for reading offprints which is different from that employed in reading textbooks and which it would be more expedient for the student to employ in this case. Chemical, Naval Architecture and Mechanical quote the importance of offprints. It is possible that since most of the information is conveyed by diagrams and formulae that skimming as such is not a useful skill for the student to acquire. His greatest need may be the interpretation of non-verbal messages as is mentioned in Electrical and to be put through a standard speed-reading course is not productive.

Another factor affecting the kind and amount of reading done will be the first degree of the student. As is mentioned in Public Health (see Table 5.5) the subject is 'on the fringes of biology, medicine and engineering' and in any case is predominantly a conversion course for non-specialists so there will be a heavy concentration on reading around the subject and possibly of a more basic textbook kind.

TABLE 5.1 CHEMICAL

	Expected to read original papers - no 1 textbook can be recommended - most work at research stage - references mentioned during lectures - must show evidence of external reading but 'good student with good lecture notes without reading could pass'.

TABLE 5.2 MARINE TECHNOLOGY

Naval Architecture	Reading lists given but of papers/offprints rather than books. 'No 1 textbook can be quoted'. References are 'spontaneous' and refer to work being researched at present moment. Hence the need to talk about information in lectures and follow up immediately the few appropriate references. May be 10 references for 1 major option.

TABLE 5.3 MECHANICAL

	Most information comes from lectures - offprints/handouts supplement lectures - otherwise 'refer to odd book'. More systematic references in relation to project. 'Possible to pass without much reading - true of most analytical subjects'.

TABLE 5.4 ELECTRICAL

	Reading not essential but advisable - important information in textbooks to be found in offprints - important to read round the subject - possible to get necessary amount of information from lectures to pass exams but unlikely to be sufficient to pass project. 'Assume reading is a must'. Kind of reading = solid-packed information for intensive reading ∴ no skimming - half books are mathematical formulae. 'Rate of development in field very intense - difficult for lecturers to keep up and read everything they should'.

In Mining (see Table 5.6) and Civil (see Table 5.5) booklists are given and divided into lists A, B and C as being essential, desirable and less important and clearly for a student who is concerned to do particularly well, reading is an important task. However, it is sheer pressure of time and lack of linguistic proficiency which forces the majority of overseas students to be content to 'just pass' rather than do very well. Underachievement may inevitably be part of the overseas students' lot. There is a much greater chance for them to realise their full potential if they take their courses over two years and thus have adequate time to read around the subject, a fact I have already mentioned in the section on Relationship between Levels.

TABLE 5.5 CIVIL

Public Health	Section A booklist = essential 10 books supplement lectures - student to synthesize- Section B booklist = relevent, immediate interest on 5 major areas (= 52 books) Section C booklist = journals, proceedings of importance. Reason for importance 'Public Health is on the fringes of engineering/medicine/biology' - '5 weeks lectures for 1 option is very little time'.
Engineering Hydrology Water Resources	1 list = essential 10 books but student could manage with 7, 2nd list - recommended. Students' attitude to reading : 'not enough time', list too long', 'books not in library'. May be true that student could pass without reading a book but fairer to say 'more likely to pass if student attends all lectures, take good notes than if he just reads'.
Transport	(information not yet obtained)

TABLE 5.6 MINING

2 firm textbooks = 'bibles'. Apart from those, booklist subdivided into Section A = essential 4 books for each major option (should be bought) Section B = desirable (11 for 1 major option, 4 for another, 5 for another) Section C = secondary (8 for 3 options) Possibly also a couple of references to follow up after each lecture = offprint/short article.

Assessment

In general, assessment is based purely on written examinations, where both major and minor options are examined after two terms' work, and a dissertation, produced as a result of a six month project. In all cases it is necessary to pass the examinations and the minimum mark varies from 35% to 45% but a poor exam in all cases may be compensated for by a good dissertation. The relative marks for exams and dissertations vary. Some departments do not specify exactly whereas others are more precise - notably, Mechanical (see Table 6.1) and Naval Architecture (see Table 6.2) give two thirds weighting to the exam, one third to the dissertation and Public Health, (see Table 6.3) gives one half to the exam, one quarter each to dissertation and continuous assessment. However, what is clear is that there has to be an overall satisfactory mark, taking both lecture courses and project work into account, with more importance being given to the former than to the latter.

There is some continuous assessment which may put less strain on the student and help him to monitor his own progress. In Water Resources and Hydrology (see Table 6.3) for example, 10 written reports are continuously assessed and are counted as 'a bit of an indicator'. In Public Health the situation is even more formalised with 12 lab reports actually carrying 25% of the total assessment. Occasionally minor options taken in other departments will be continuously assessed, such as in Mechanical with the Computing option.

TABLE 6.1 MECHANICAL

M.Sc. 5 x 3 hr. exams based on 2 major, 3 minor options - end May/June. 1 project linked to 1 minor option carries 50% marks for that minor option. No specified pass mark but 40% desired minimum - less than 40% in 1 subject may be compensated for by dissertation. No oral exam but all candidates interviewed in June. Dissertation carries 1/3 of total assessment. Subjects chosen from list by mutual agreement. Standard required is similar to that required of Research M. Sc. thesis except that the volume of work required is reduced by half.
No in-course assessment except for some partial assessment for minor options outside department, ie in Computing and Mechanical Engineering.

TABLE 6.2 MARINE

Naval Architecture
M.Sc. 3 x 3 hr. papers based on 3 major options; 2 x 1 hr. papers for minor options - May. If successful in exams → 6 month project - subject thought out by student, ie no list given - subject considered end Term 1, specification written end Term 2. If poor exam, need for very good dissertation.
Weighting : 400 exam
200 dissertation → TOTAL 600 Marks. No in-course assessment.
Dip. 3 x 3 hr. exam. - end May, early June for 2 majors, 1 minor option. Mini project on-going.

Where there is no formal continuous assessment, there may be internal exams to check progress, as in Chemical (see Table 6.4) and in Public Health where this mark will be crucial in supporting a transfer to MSc.

The most crucial skill in assessment is clearly writing. Having taken lecture notes, the student needs to be able to reorganize the essential information in a reasonable shape, so that it can be used at a later date. That is one kind of writing skill. He needs to be able to write coherently under pressure and at speed. In other words, he needs to be able to write against the clock. That is a second kind of writing skill - perhaps the most important one. The third skill is the ability to sift through the mass of notes from his reading, to organize what is relevant in a logical coherent way for his dissertation. The pressure here is different. Having built up to fever pitch and passed the exam hurdle, he is now virtually alone for the next six months, responsible for his own time and it may be precisely the lack of pressure which causes the problem. The way different departments ease the transition between department-based work and independent research may be very significant.

TABLE 6.3 CIVIL

1. Public Health

M.Sc. 4 x 3 hr. papers based on 4 modules - Term 3, week 1 - 1mark 35%—40% may be accepted - must be passed before 6 month project - carry 50% assessment. Lab. reports (12) continuously assessed carry 25% assessment. Dissertation, chosen from list, must show evidence of 'evaluation and critical thought', carries 25% assessment. Oral exam. end September for all candidates, if not too many. Unofficial exam after every module (=after every 5 weeks)

Dip. 3 lecture options examined - end Term 3. Lab. work continuously assessed. Also mini dissertation.

2. Water Resources & Engineering Hydrology

M.Sc. 4 x 3 hr. papers - Term 3, week 1 - must be passed with at least 40%. If 1 mark is 30 - 40%, dissertation + oral may compensate. 2 terms' report writing continuously assessed (10 per option per term) = 'bit of an indicator' - contributes mainly where borderline cases may be transferring, eg good Diploma student may transfer at Xmas.
Oral exam. (1 failure in 10 years) for all candidates if not too many - otherwise all borderline cases + some better students. Dissertation must be satisfactory.
Dip. 3 x 3 hr. papers - June. Mini project.

3. Transport

M.Sc. 3 x 1 hr. papers based on 3 major options - Term 3, Week 1. 2 minor options in course assessed - passmark 40% - compensation by dissertation may be allowed at the discretion of the External Examiner. Oral exam - all students examined on dissertation. Dissertation - end September - must be satisfactory.

TABLE 6.4 CHEMICAL

M.Sc. 4 x 3 hr. papers (1 x 3 hr. per major: 1 x 3 hr. per 2 minors) - Term 3, week 1.
Dissertation examined end September after 5 months project work - subjects chosen in Term 1 - possible to do project in another department. Generally necessary to pass exam, with minimum 45% but really good dissertation could compensate for poor exam. Less than 30% in any paper equals complete fail. All dissertations externally examined. Oral exam is for all candidates after written papers. No continuous assessment - Exam. after Term 1 to monitor progress.
Dip. 4 options examined in 4 x 2 hr. papers - June - otherwise some in-course assessment - no project.

TABLE 6.5 MINING

M.Sc. 3 x 3 hr. papers based on 3 major options. Minor options taken in other departments may be examined but little weight given - Term 3, week 1. 40% minimum pass required in 3 major options, but degree of flexibility ie 'can be averaged up'. If less than 50%, extra effort on dissertation required. 1 dissertation (2 students could work together) – 50% pass required. The overall standard of work and presentation expected in a research project would be 60% of the work from an equivalent M.Sc. by research. Oral exam. - 10/15 minutes interview for all candidates, covering dissertation and course work.
No in course assessment.

TABLE 6.6 ELECTRICAL

M.Sc. 3 x 3 hr. papers based on 3 major options; 2 x 3 hr. papers for minor options, 2 minors being averaged - end May/early June. Project started Term 2 but tackled seriously after exam. - element of choice in subject - both considered together in assessment. Oral exam for all candidates on dissertation.
Dip. 5 options examined (=5 lecture courses) in 4 exams. - June - carry 4/7 assessment. Project in course assessed, started immediately in October, main weight given to experimental work and thesis, equivalent to 3 exam. papers, carried 3/7 assessment.

Conclusion

There are many implications in such data. I have considered only a few here. If we can build up profiles of courses in this way, the details of which may change from year to year but whose basic framework will hold, then we may derive benefits. Firstly, it will help us as language teachers to decide on priorities and then order those priorities. Secondly, it will help us to prepare the student to behave more rationally in his study situation by telling him more precisely what is likely to happen, what he can expect, why certain demands are being made and so on.

SPECIFIC CULTURAL PROFILES

The four papers in this section cover four areas of the world which provide *in toto* a sizeable proportion of the UK overseas student population: the Arab Middle East, Iran, the Indian Sub-continent and Thailand.

The authors of these four papers differ quite widely in their attitude to the appropriacy of attempting specific cultural profiles on students from particular countries and regions, and in the manifestations of cultural specificity they have chosen to highlight, but they come to interestingly similar conclusions about the differences between educational arrangements and learning styles abroad and in this country and about the practical problems such differences can present.

At one edge of the spectrum, Bowers makes a spirited attack on the value of attempting a cultural profile at all, observing *inter alia* that 'individual variations will override national and cultural patterns. Houghton, at the other edge, finds little difficulty in making generalizations about the writing problems of Iranians. The other two papers occupy a middle range: Hawkey and Nakornchai, for instance, conclude that cultural profiling, while inevitably beset by individual exceptions, is both feasible and of use in programme planning.

The authors also differ in their approach. In the first paper, Hawkey and Nakornchai offer an 'insider view' of Thai students studying and show how personal and educational misunderstandings can arise from divergent cultural practices and expectancies. In the second paper, Houghton outlines ways in which sociolinguistic factors in Iran have led to quite different attitudes to the written word from those prevailing in the West and then illustrates the need to take these factors into account when helping Iranians to write within British conventions. Dudley-Evans and Swales approach a broadly similar pedagogic objective by emphasizing differences in educational systems and study habits and thus view the cultural divergence rather more in terms of 'education shock'. Both these last two papers lead into contrastive analysis including contrastive textology, with Houghton adopting a more rigorously analytic approach. It is very likely that the reader, in comparing the features of written Farsi and Arabic as presented, will be struck by their great similarity. Bowers, in the final paper, understands cultural profiling in a broader sense than the other contributors and shows the dangers for educationists, among others, in latching onto cultural stereotypes. In the narrower context of educational environment, however, Bowers recognizes that generalizable differences between countries can be established and concludes that 'the overall learning style in Indian institutions, therefore, tends to be more passive, more concerned with the acquisition of information, more anonymous' - conclusions that the previous contributors had reached for Thailand, Iran and Middle East.

THAI STUDENTS STUDYING

Roger Hawkey, The British Council, London
& Choochit Nakornchai, School of Oriental and African Studies,
University of London

Assumptions and Approach

Most educationalists would admit to mixed feelings on whether it is valid or even acceptable to make generalizations about whole populations of learners, based on their cultural background. Yet such generalizations **are** made especially by those whose major professional responsibility is to help overseas students make the best of their studying time in countries like Britain. This might suggest that **cultural profiling** can be a valuable aid to successful programme planning.

We shall make the following assumptions:

1 That some kind of specific profile of Thai students likely to be studying in the UK is **feasible** in spite of the absence of a **model** for the contrastive analysis of cultures. In other words, generalizations about the influence of socio-cultural, educational political, religious and linguistic factors can usefully be made.

2 That some, most or all such general characteristics may nevertheless be overridden by variations in individual learners. UK teachers, course designers or counsellors will often meet Thai students who are nothing like any profile says they should be (just as Thai and other overseas students will come into contact with teachers here who are nothing like their unofficial cultural profile of UK teachers says **they** should be).

3 That if this seminar is concerned with discovering more about overseas students so that they can be helped to learn and live better here, we should be looking not only at the learners but also at their teachers, programme designers and counsellors. Cultural profiling and whatever emerges from the process should reflect not only how we see the learners, not only how they see us but also how the learners see how we see them; the learners should surely be aware of why and how their 'cultural profiles' are worked out and, even better, take part in the process.

Thus, we feel that it makes sense to carry out this brief exercise in informal cultural profiling in tandem: student and teacher; outsider and insider; consumer and producer. Differences of opinion and emphasis which have emerged from our dialogue have not been consensused out. They may themselves reveal something about the different perspectives taken by the two parties painting the cultural portrait.

Our profiling approach is as follows:

a to look at a selection of **apparently generalizable characteristics** based on Thai students who, like Choochit, attended pre-University college in Thailand;

b to investigate possible **reasons** for such characteristics; on the grounds that **cause** as well as effect matters to those responsible for providing the most sensitive and effective possible training for the overseas learners concerned;

c to check out and expand our findings through **an actual case study** tracing Choochit's progress in her extended period of education and research in Britain.

In the original talk at the SELMOUS Seminar, the characteristics and their possible causes were discussed in an informal dialogue, based on loosely-rehearsed notes. We shall present the dialogue in a similar form here for the sake of economy and truth to the original.

Apparent Characteristics of Thai Students Studying in Thailand

Educational/Methodological Factors

Large-Group Oriented

Roger Hawkey (RH)	Choochit Nakornchai (CN)
Classes of 35+ are the norm even at advanced levels. There is little or no use of group work or individualisation approaches. Students have adjusted to whole-class teaching techniques, including choral work, which is acceptable even at pre-University stage.	No tradition of seminar or tutorial work even at university; seminar work is in fact handled in mini-lecture mode.
	The main reason for this system is the lack of financial resources, which has led to a lack of trained teachers at all levels. One result perhaps, is a loss of individuality and self-confidence in many students.

Book-oriented

A fairly rigid set book system in all subjects; syllabus = 'the book' at most levels. Little in the way of multi-media approaches to learning

The 'standard curriculum' approach facilitates educational planning and suits a situation where resources for teacher training and monitoring are limited. However, syllabus revision is too infrequent; set-books tend to fossilise.

The dominance of the book may reduce the educational authority and scope of teachers. It is also unhelpful in the development of learners' critical faculties and creativity.

Thailand is, of course, by no means unique in having to cope with the problem of book-oriented syllabuses.

Goal-oriented

RH

A firmly entrenched tradition of teaching towards tests and exams which directly reflect the content of the Set-books.

CN

The dominant long-term goal for everyone is university entry, which is a social and economic must for all, though a possibility for only a few. Choice of speciality at university is determined by exam marks rather than by individual interest, entrants with the higher marks going into medicine, the next best into engineering and so on. Parental pressure and status are also key factors. Few university places and even fewer grants are available.

Educational/Cultural Factors

Teacher-dependent

This characteristic clearly reflects influences from the educational/methodological as well as the educational/cultural category.

RH

There is a tradition and, therefore, an expectation that the teacher will provide clear control and direction at all levels.

We should beware, however, of over-simplified = equations between what is traditional and expected and what is difficult to accept because it is new. A foreign teacher in Thailand may well find that students revel in the opportunity to be creative and to work independently if they offered it, just **because** it is novel.

CN

Students tend to be spoon-fed, generally accepting a fairly passive role in the teaching/learning process. The tradition of accepting what a teacher says without question reflects the special place held by teachers in Thai society; after all, they are playing the role previously played by the monks, a dominant role not unnaturally welcomed by the teachers themselves. It is relevant, perhaps to note that the influence of western educational styles is relatively recent and not deep-rooted enough to change attitudes significantly.

As a result, learners are not given much chance to develop self-confidence or self-motivation.

Rote-learning

RH	CN
Skill in rote-learning has exploitable advantages, however, for example in reading for detailed information.	Obviously this is a by-product of factors already mentioned, especially, perhaps, the kind of straight presentation of a wide range of information for absorption rather than critical reaction, which was a characteristic of traditional education. This is reinforced by the fact that teachers & exams discourage questioning, discussion and criticism. The result is a lack of depth in the study of any particular subject area.

General Attitudes

Unrebellious

RH	CN
	The impression may well be that Thai students are particularly patient and tolerant. One might previously have regarded them as apolitical but during the events of 1974 and '76, university students were in the forefront of untypically violent moves for political change. Thus, a mixture of tolerance, a strong sense of unfair play and frustration can be volatile.

Perhaps the tradition of submerging feelings goes further than in most societies - with the result that whereas neither mild nor moderate anger will be revealed, **extreme** anger may emerge in an extreme form.

Face

The 'western' teacher cannot help noticing a reluctance to risk appearing to be in the wrong **and** a reluctance to put others in such a position. He can learn to adjust the way he **presents** critical comment; he may well find it more difficult to **elicit.**

What is seen as a matter of 'face' may in fact be a combination of 'over-politeness' and a tendency to set considerable store by appearances, to judge things at 'face' value. Straight criticism is more than usually unwelcome seen as it is, perhaps, as a deliberate attempt to cause loss of face.

All this may result in a communication barrier between 'western' teacher and Thai learner.

Problem Areas in UK Studies: The Thai students' point of view

Having dealt with some of the socio-cultural and educational aspects of the background of Thai students in the previous section, we shall concentrate now on the kinds of problems which students are likely to come across, or indeed have come across, during their studies in UK. The problem areas presented here are mainly based upon the personal experience of an overseas learner (ie CN) plus some general observations. It is intended that they should cover external factors such as places of study, subject areas, problems of language disadvantages, differences in attitudes, as well as, implicitly, individual factors such as personality, self-adaptability, reactions, etc. Although these problems are not uncommon, the fact that they are felt and described by an overseas student will probably be of some interest to people who are involved in teaching or planning courses for overseas students. Case studies can help bridge the gap between facts and generalizations, which may eventually lead to better understanding and possible improvements in programme design.

In order to locate the problem areas precisely within the framework of the UK educational system, it is necessary to deal with difficulties at two separate levels: **pre-university level** and **graduate/postgraduate levels.** The **pre-university level** is the most crucial period for overseas students who aim at completing their undergraduate studies in UK. It often proves to be the hardest time for them as they are at a stage when the process of self-adaptation to the new social and cultural environment and to new study modes has hardly started but is most urgent. The question of how well and how soon students can adapt themselves depends, of course, upon individual factors and motivations as well as on places of study, subject areas, language disadvantages and attitude difference.

In general, most Thai students who intend to do a university degree course are sent to study for their O and A level examinations at technical colleges or colleges of further education where little attention may be paid to the academic progress or performance of students because (a) there is a high staff-student ratio and (b) the main focus is not on gearing students to university entrance. Further, it should be admitted that technical colleges or colleges of further education do not always create an inspiring atmosphere for the new-comers, who have to mix with other students with very different goals. Teachers here are not always able to give advice on university degree courses and the library facilities can be limited. Such environmental factors, however peripheral they may appear, play an important part in the process of self-adaptation especially as newly-arrived overseas learners are likely to be in a state of extra sensitivity. This being the case, their enthusiasm may be tainted by frustration and this may to some extent affect their academic progress. Hence, influence of the learning environment cannot be disregarded as a factor bearing on the academic progress of overseas students.

With regard to subject areas, a key problem that usually arises is a lack of background knowledge. This becomes more apparent when comparing the academic performance achieved by science students with that of students on the arts side. Most science students tend to experience a lesser degree of difficulty than arts students since there is a good deal of overlap between the subject content taught in Thailand and in the UK, which makes for an earlier take-off point. Arts students, on the other hand, have to start much more from scratch due to their lack of knowledge of the cultural, historical and literary backgrounds required of them. Besides, they not only have to cope with new content and concepts but also have to learn different approaches and different emphases in subjects like history, literature, law and other branches of the social sciences. As a result, arts students need more time to catch up with their studies, to achieve the level of background knowledge required for them to be able to take a critical view. Unfortunately, most teachers are inclined to presuppose that all students, including overseas newcomers, possess the general background knowledge in those subjects already mentioned. It is at this point that overseas learners should be encouraged to make use of self-study modes, since these are the only means of acquiring the background knowledge presupposed by their teachers.

Lack of fluency in language use may result from interference from the first language, which is non-inflectional and has a completely different system of phonological and syntactic structures from that of English. It is also possibly due to the fact that English as taught in Thailand is non-communicative, ie grammar-orientated. Lack of fluency proves especially disadvantageous because of the pressures of the highly competitive university entrance procedures. It is generally the case that examiners expect a high degree of language fluency, especially from students taking exams in arts subjects. Science students, on the other hand, seem to be at less of a linguistic disadvantage since most science subjects are maths-orientated.

Time is a crucial factor in a closed-exam and as a result of lack of fluency, overseas students may find themselves unable to finish the exam papers within the time allowed, despite the fact that they know how to answer the questions. Whether a closed-exam method is a good means of testing students' academic abilities is probably a question worth considering.

It is worth noting that although the English linguistic output of Thai students often appears minimal, it does not follow that their level of comprehension is minimal. In fact, understanding is generally greater than output performance. However, Thai students' minimal output performance is not necessarily due to lack of fluency alone but is probably reinforced by the fact that they have been taught to be quiet and obedient and that they have not been encouraged to be interactive in class. They are not generally in the habit of asking questions even when they do not understand, simply to avoid being accused of showing a lack of respect since asking questions can sometimes be misinterpreted as challenging teachers. Disagreeing with teachers is probably the worst of all crimes. This does not mean that they always agree with the teacher's view, but rather that they are disinclined to show their disagreement. Here respect for teachers seems to have a negative effect on students' performance.

They also tend not to express opinions in public to avoid being accused of showing off and also because they have not been trained to do so. Even when asked to give opinions, they tend not to give straight criticisms, because of what may seem to be an undue concern for 'politeness'. This seems to create a problem for teachers in the *UK as well as for Thai students* studying here, since teachers can get little feedback from students, which makes it difficult for them to assess their actual academic performance. And since there is no personal supervision at this stage, pre-university teachers may therefore be relying on inadequate or misleading feedback.

Thus, a problem of attitude difference, not understood by teachers because of their lack of familiarity with a cultural background of particular learners, may lead them to highlight **language** problems as the major cause of lack of communication when the real reasons may be different.

However, it is believed that attitudes can be changed when people are exposed to the new social environment or culture. If this is true, then the problem of attitude difference is not a permanent one, ie it will cease to appear when students have been helped to adapt so that old attitudes are replaced (temporarily at least) by a new set imposed by the expectations of that society.

Overseas students who have survived the pre-university years in UK tend to have fewer difficulties at **graduate and postgraduate levels** as by then they will have managed to develop study and living approaches reasonably suited to their needs. Language problems should have been reduced as they start to specialise in their chosen fields of studies. However, general observation seems to suggest that overseas students who come to **start** their studies in the UK at postgraduate level still tend to be teacher-dependent and to maintain certain attitudes such as 'over-politeness' and respect for teachers, which account for their reluctance to criticise as well as for their tendency to be silent in open discussions.

It is probably worth pointing out that although overseas students who come to start their studies at postgraduate level may be exposed to the same kinds of problems as those formed at pre-university level, they may be experienced in a less acute form. This tends to be so for two reasons: first, university entrance at the postgraduate level is not as selective or competitive as at undergraduate level and secondly, the students have a greater amount of personal contact with their supervisors who can then pay more attention to their progress and may be closer to their problems. Thus, the kinds of problems encountered at this level may derive more from difficulties with theory or with maintaining a systematic approach to study or research than from language disadvantage as such.

Whatever teachers, programme designers or counsellors may feel about the acceptability of 'cultural profiling', overseas students themselves would seem to be mainly in favour of it. Anything that helps in the development of more sensitive, helpful learning programmes must be welcome.

THE WRITING PROBLEMS OF IRANIAN STUDENTS

Diane Houghton, University of Birmingham

There are several thousand Iranian students at present in further and higher education institutions in this country. An experienced teacher can often identify peculiarly Iranian mistakes in their writing in English, ranging from common grammatical or lexical errors to the use of strange paragraph or essay organization.

To attempt to understand the underlying reasons for these writing difficulties one can turn to two areas of linguistics: (a) sociolinguistics - social and cultural factors related to Iranian views about the nature and function of the writing process in society; and (b) contrastive linguistics - areas of difference in grammar and syntax between English and Farsi, plus contrastive rhetoric, ie, differences at the level of discourse structure. (The history of education in Iran may also be a relevant factor but it lies beyond the scope of this paper.)

There are five sociolinguistic aspects which may be considered:

1. the linguistic composition of the Iranian population;
2. differences between spoken and written forms in Farsi;
3. the extent of literacy in Iran;
4. historical uses of the written language;
5. social, political and religious influences on attitudes to the writing process.

It is difficult to determine the linguistic composition of the Iranian population with any accuracy. The figures available from the 1956 and 1966 censuses are not entirely reliable, and the figures chosen are quoted in Yarmohammadi (1977) from an estimated figure for 1974 in the Iran Almanac based on the 1956 census. However, they do show the balance between the languages fairly well. The total number of people accounted for is over 30 million, and Iran probably has a population of about 35 million today, so it should be possible to estimate figures for the current year.

Indo-European family

1 FARSI & RELATED DIALECTS

17,515,000	FARSI DIALECTS
1,800,000	GILAKI
1,500,000	MAZANDANI

2 OTHER LANGUAGES IN IRANIAN BRANCH OF INDO-EUROPEAN

600,000	BALUCHI
200,000	KURDISH (NB this figure seems very low)
25,000	PUSHTO, TAJIK & TALASH

3 ARMENIAN BRANCH OF INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY

250,000	ARMENIAN
100,000	ASSYRIAN

(These are mainly Christian communities)

Non-Indo-European families

1 TURKISH & RELATED LANGUAGES

5,000,000	TURKISH & AZERBAIJANI TURKIC
2,500,000	LURI & BAKHTIARI
450,000	TURKOMEN

2 ARAB LANGUAGES

450,000	ARABIC

3 RELIGIOUS MINORITY LANGUAGES

100,000	JEWISH
40,000	ZOROASTRIAN

The above figures suggest that about half of the country possesses Farsi as its L1, and that some of the minorities represent quite sizeable percentages of the population. Zonis (1971) researching into the composition of the Iranian political élite, found that virtually the only non-Farsi speaking groups represented in his sample were speakers of Turkish or its variants.

Thus in Iran well over a third of the population is at a disadvantage in relation to the standard written language. But even for speakers of Farsi and related dialects the transition from speech to writing is not straightforward. The differences between spoken and written include word formation, pronunciation and style. Examples include:

a shortening of verb forms;
/mıʃınəm/(I am sitting) is written MINESHINAM; /beree/(let him go) is written BERAVAD.

b regular differences in the pronunciation of certain vowels; ĀN (that) is pronounced /uun/ in spoken; NĀN (bread) is pronounced /nuun/: KHUB (good) becomes /xob/. These are not variations of the same vowel, but vowel changes; nor are they related to social class usages. They differentiate informal (spoken) from formal (written or public).

c much greater difference in style between spoken and written than that pertaining in English. Writing is associated with a narrower and different range of functions. Thus the teaching of writing is of necessity from the start a formal exercise, and it is not possible for children to express themselves freely in writing using their existing language skills, as it is for English schoolchildren.

There may be a relationship between this and the literacy figures for Iran. Again, there are difficulties with the reliability of statistics. The best that can be done is to take figures from the 1956 and 1966 censuses, and to choose good estimates for later dates.

	IRAN			URBAN		
	F	M	Percent of total literacy	F	M	Percent of total literacy
1956	8	22	15	22	46	35
1966	18	40	29	39	62	50
1975	(30)	(56)	(43)	(55)	(77)	(66)

The figures for 1975 are estimates by Tofigh (1976). He quotes figures for 1968 which have presumably been obtained from the Ministry of Education and bases the 1975 estimate on calculations made from the earlier figures. The figures given above will suggest that until recently literacy levels were very low, particularly in the rural areas, and even now the figures over the whole country suggest wide variations, with males in urban areas having easier access to education. In 1976 the take-up rate for compulsory education was still under 70%, despite a total enrolment of 7.7 million in all types of education programme, including 170,000 university students. It is quite likely, from these figures, that some of the Iranian students in this country come from extended families containing members who may have received no formal education.

With reference to the fourth sociolinguistic area, written Farsi reached its peak of perfection in the works of its great poets (Ferdousi, over a thousand years ago, and Hafez and Saadi, over 800 years ago); and they are still known and loved among a wide range of social classes today. Religion contributes to another tradition of writing. Farsi Islamic writing is heavily influenced both in style and lexis by Arabic. Indeed, until fairly recently, fluency in Arabic was an essential accomplishment for an educated man. Most of Khomeini's work is in Arabic. In contrast, the kinds of writing appropriate to academic areas such as engineering, sociology, accountancy etc., have tended to enter Farsi through translation, and thus have introduced ways of writing that do not relate very closely to Iranian traditions. These differences include structures and organizational patterns that were infrequently used before. An example of this is the passive, which is essential to any kind of academic writing in English, but is relatively uncommon in Farsi, being avoided where possible.

Lastly, we cannot assume that we are dealing with students who share our values in relation to the intrinsic worth of reading and writing as characteristics of the educated person in the liberal humanist tradition. The educated Iranian élite as defined in western terms must be very small indeed, but the reasons for the differences are not just class-related. There is a tendency among western academics to assume a direct relationship between technological progress and liberal humanist views of the world. In relation to Iran in particular I feel this may be a misconception. It is true that over recent years Iran has placed great faith in the industrialization process, and given emphasis to science, engineering and medicine in the education system, but I doubt if it was intended that the liberal human aspects of the western tradition should be an integral part of the educational experience. Three factors suggest this:

a the very strong censorship imposed by the pre-revolutionary government, not just against writing of a Marxist nature, but against anything which reflected western 'decadence'. Sadeq Hedayat, a great writer in European terms, was discouraged and banned in Iran on the grounds of his subversive and anti-social tendencies.

b the prevailing belief, political, social and religious, that the function of art is social and didactic - that it has a duty to reflect elevated thoughts and to provide sound moral guidance. The following extract translated from a critical article illustrates this:

> The writer is like a doctor who must use poisons (ie drugs) to heal men, not to poison them. A doctor who poisons people is a traitor, and a writer who conceives improper thoughts, no matter how much they may be in accordance with the principles of art, is just as much a traitor, accountable for his thoughts, and deserving of punishment.
>
> (Nafisi, 1953)

The western notion of art for art's sake is therefore not acceptable.

c The underlying religious ethos which has more recently come to the fore, is, in its most extreme form critical of the whole history of western development from the Renaissance on. The scepticism of Descartes and the emphasis on the observation of externals encouraged by the experimental method of the natural sciences have all conspired to turn man away from the true knowledge, which is an inner knowledge, and can only be found through God and religion. (see Purjavadi 1976)

There seem to be two main implications arising from the sociolinguistic factors discussed above. Firstly, many of the students we teach may be expected to find the writing process difficult because of their earlier experiences of learning to write standard Farsi, which is likely to have been less than easy owing to such factors as possession of a non-Farsi L1 etc. Secondly, the students, because of their different views about the place and function of writing, may be resistant to some of the uses of writing in which we expect them to develop proficiency.

Now let us turn to the second main area of linguistics which may help lead to an understanding of the nature of Iranian writing errors in English - contrastive linguistics. A most useful summary of the main grammatical and syntatic differences between Farsi and English can be found in Matthews (1976). He covers a wide variety of differences including the article system, gender and number, subject verb concord, omission of pronouns, formation of the genitive, use of adjectival forms for adverbs, word order, use of tenses, avoidance of the passive, formation of the conditional, reported speech, subordinate clauses including relative and temporal clauses, conjunctions and problems of compound verbs. Jafarpur (1979) presents a detailed analysis of the contexts in which both English and Farsi do or do not use some kind of article. My own analysis of students' mistakes in writing suggests that a large number of errors which it would be easy to attribute to carelessness can be attributed to the use of Farsi patterns in English. The following sentence provides a good example:

> If I was wanting to go Iran, I was not working for the exam.

This looks like a poor attempt at a type 2 conditional, present unreal or unlikely, but in fact it is a direct translation of a past impossible conditional, type 3 in English, and means:

> Had I wanted to go to Iran, I would not have worked for the exam.

When dealing with large numbers of Iranian students it would make sense therefore to pay special attention to particular identified problem areas in one's teaching.

But the problem does not stop here. A student may be able to master grammar at the sentence level, but be unable to write an acceptable essay. Johnson (1977) discusses the reasons for this lack of coherence, and despite a number of possible explanations, suggests that not much is yet known about the reasons why foreign students may be incoherent in English. But contrastive rhetoric does have something to say about this problem. Kaplan (1976) accepts that the Sapir/Whorf thesis of linguistic relativity is modifiable and its effects counterable, particularly at the structural level of language. But he asserts that at higher order levels, what linguists are now calling discourse structure, the notion of relativity still holds good.

> More significant differences seem to lie in those areas which affect the operation of language at the highest levels. These operations involve both high-level syntactic phenomena and the areas normally included in semantics and rhetoric. Thus they involve logical concepts but not so much in the sense of universal logic as much as in the sense of logic in relation to cultural and linguistically defined interpretations of the phenomenological world (p13).

He suggests that this is particularly the case where we are not dealing with physical attributes, but with attributes that are culturally specified, and which achieve their meaning through being embedded in verbal networks:

> 'Language cannot be finally understood except in its use functions - as human communication sensitive to the social contexts in which it occurs.' (p14).

I think this notion of social context needs to be taken very seriously, as the following extracts from student essays suggest:

> 1 **What are your opinions about student life in Britain?**
>
> Generally speaking, student life-style, regardless of one's social position and background, is something of uniqueness. Students' attitude has recently been considered as a socially and politically useful one. Although student life and way of thinking has many things in common all over the world but as British way of life is notably unique, student way of life has its own specifications.
>
> 2 **Write a description of your home town for a travel brochure**
>
> TABRIZ
>
> Mainly transportation in my city includes two sort of travelling: eg a) external travelling b) internal travelling. The former refers to any trips between Tabriz and other cities and the latter concerns travelling in roads and streets.

Even with the grammatical mistakes corrected, these essays would not be acceptable because the students have misjudged the social contexts in which their work would be likely to be read. This is particularly difficult for an overseas student, because much of his work is a dummy run, so to speak, for a tutor or unknown examiner, and not for an intended public audience. This suggests that teachers need to look very closely at the kinds of writing students are expected to practise, in order to see how closely this relates to the kind of written English that overseas students are most likely to make use of in the long term.

In order to find a solution to the problem of rhetorical differences one needs to know the main differences between English and the other language in question. These relate mainly to the logical organization of writing. It is axiomatic that all languages and societies have a logic, but, to quote Kaplan again.

> There are differences from society to society in the ways in which the propositions of its 'logic' may be manipulated (p 15)

In the case of English, this logic tends to be reflected in a linear organization. Good writing moves logically from one point to the next, expanding and developing in an orderly fashion. Possibly this reflects a logic based on the need to use and evaluate evidence scientifically.

But Farsi shows a different discourse structure. Elaine Dehghanpisheh (1972) has made a comparative analysis of both Farsi and English paragraph structures. Although she finds that the most popular English paragraph matrix (Topic followed by optional restriction and illustration of the topic) does exist in Farsi, (without the restriction) she suggests that it is not used much, and is likely to be replaced by Farsi paragraph matrices which would produce paragraphs unacceptable in English. The student is likely to use a restatement, metaphor or simile, or proverb for his illustration.

> **Industrialization cannot bring happiness. Discuss.**
>
> I believe this statement is true. Industrialization means change the society first of all. Reaction of human being to change is a serious matter. We have a proverb in our language, it says 'Giving up the habit will bring the illness.'

Frequent use of generalization plus the above types of illustration lends a kind of moralising quality to Iranian writing. This appears to relate to the sociolinguistic point made earlier - that the writer has a moral duty towards the reader. It strengthens the case for a relationship between the logic of a society and the discourse structure of its written language.

One feature highlighted by Dehghanpisheh is the extensive use of and or but to join sentences and clauses within a sentence without connectors or full stops etc., even though these connectors exist in Farsi (see Lambton 1953). And is also used within the sentence to join lists of nouns. Extensive use of and is generally regarded in English writing as a sign of immaturity and English schoolchildren are discouraged from the habit at the primary stage. But this is definitely not the case in Farsi - it is a common feature of written style. This is illustrated in a long sentence which is also a whole paragraph taken from a geography text in Farsi. A literal translation illustrates the differences between English and Farsi style.

From ÂB VA HAVÂ-YE IRÂN, By AHMAD HUSSAIN ʿADL, TEHRAN 1961-2

Translation (LITERAL)

The clouds which come from the oceans and seas towards Iran meet with the heights of the mountains of the regions or the interior and their moisture descends in the form of rain and is either taken directly for the use of agriculture or flows in the rivers or sinks in the strata beneath the ground and parts of it are used for drinking and agriculture by means of qanats or wells (and)/or is stored in the form of snow on the mountains and in Spring and Summer and Autumn the water which is formed from its melting flows in the rivers and important sections of agriculture on the plateau of Iran are irrigated by means of those waters.

(102 word sentence/paragraph in Farsi)

LITERAL TRANSLATION FOLLOWING FARSI WORD ORDER

The clouds which from the oceans and seas towards Iran come - with the heights of the mountains of the regions or interior (meet) - and the moisture of them in the form of rain (descends) - and either directly for the use of agriculture is taken - or in the rivers flows - or in the strata beneath the ground (sinks) - and parts of it by means of qanats or wells for drinking and agriculture are used - and/or in the form of snow on the mountains (is stored) - and in Spring and Summer and Autumn the water which from the melting of that is formed - in the rivers (flows) - and important sections of agriculture on the plateau of Iran by means of those waters are irrigated

_______________ = full form of verb in Farsi

(_______________) = participle form of verb in Farsi

Headwords controlling clauses are ringed:

CLOUDS - MOISTURE (rain or snow) - WATER(S)

The passage attempts to explain the water cycle in Iran - how it rises from the seas into the clouds and eventually reaches the earth in some form or other to be utilized by man.

PARAGRAPH ANALYSIS AT CLAUSE LEVEL (MODEL)

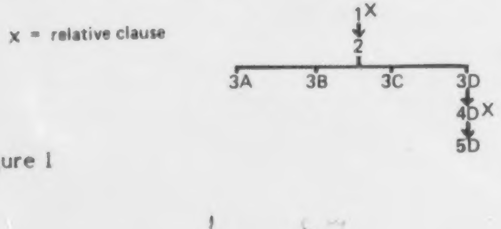


Figure 1

Figure 2

PARAGRAPH ANALYSIS AT CLAUSE LEVEL (DETAILS)

(1x) The clouds (which come from the oceans and seas towards Iran
(1) (meet with the heights of the mountains of the regions or the interior

(2) and their moisture descends in the form of rain

and

either	or	or	and/or
(3A) is taken directly for the use of agriculture	(3B) flows in the rivers	(3C) sinks in the strata beneath the ground	(3D) is stored in the mountains in the form of snow
		and	and
		(4C) parts of it are used for drinking & agriculture by means of qanats or wells	in Spring and Summer and Autumn (4Dx) The water (which is formed (from its melting (4D) (flows in the rivers and (5D) important sections of agriculture on the plateau of Iran are irrigated by means of those waters

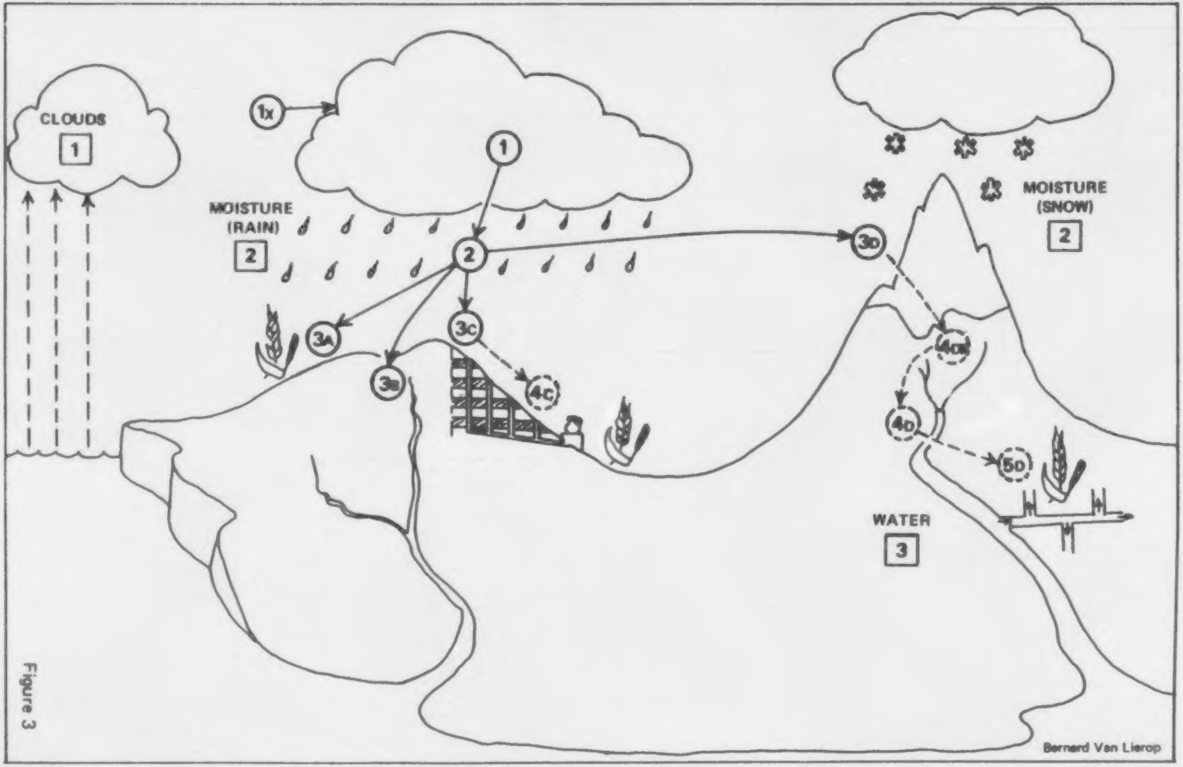

CLOUDS
1
1x
1
MOISTURE
(RAIN)
2
2
3A
3B
3C
4C
3D
4D
4D
5D
MOISTURE
(SNOW)
2
WATER
3
Bernard Van Lierop

Figure 3

Figures 1 and 2 show an analysis of the paragraph into clauses. With two exceptions all the clauses are co-ordinated by **and** or **either/or;** in other words, co-ordination is generally preferred to subordination. But this does not reflect a simplicity of structure. Figure 3, for which I am indebted to Bernard van Lierop, shows that there are four alternatives - water can reach the ground in four ways : directly for agricultural use (3A), it can flow into the rivers (3B), go down through the underground qanat system (3C), or fall on the mountains as snow (3D). This is fairly simple, but following this, the processes which are dependent in sequential terms on 3C and D are not differentiated structurally. Thus **and** is used both to link alternatives possibly occurring simultaneously, and to show sequence. An English writer would probably enumerate the alternatives in a topic sentence and then list them:

eg There are four alternative ways in which water from the seas may reach the soil in Iran -a,b,c,d, etc.

And and either/or would be acceptable connectors here, but for clauses sequentially linked to these, 4C, 4D etc., the use of connectors such as after that, following this, etc., would be more appropriate.

This is not the only reason for the difficulty of the passage. Turning to the subjects of the many verbs one notices that only one substance is involved in different forms (H_2O), and 9 clauses are dependent upon only three forms of this substance, shown by the head nouns CLOUDS, MOISTURE, and WATER. Writing of this level of density suggests that we are not dealing with immature writing, but writing of some complexity. This is emphasised by the use of participle forms for some verbs in the text, indicating that the subject of the clause may be found at an earlier point in the sentence.

The work being done in contrastive rhetoric suggests that students will need to be taught fairly explicitly the differences between writing in English and their own L1. They need information on paragraph structures in relation to the social purposes of pieces of writing. Ongoing work in discourse analysis may be able to offer teachers information which can be incorporated in an appropriate form into writing programmes (see Coulthard 1977).

In conclusion, in view of the many sociolinguistic and contrastive difficulties likely to be involved, both ESP and academic subject specialists need to look closely at the kind of writing assignments students are given, in relation to the end objectives of the student's education. The student can only master a limited number of varieties of English writing in the time available for his studies in English. Teachers need to be in a position to make informed choices about priorities in the teaching of writing. This suggests the need for close liaison between English and subject specialists, particularly where large numbers of overseas students are enrolled on one course, and it also has implications for the structure of the whole course.

Bibliography

ᶜADL, H A (1961-2)
Āb va havā-ye Irān, Tehran

COULTHARD, M (1977)
An introduction to discourse analysis

DEHGHANPISHEH, E (1972)
'Contrastive analysis of the rhetoric of Persian & English paragraphs'

JAFARPUR, A (1979)
'Persian & English articles: a contrastive study', in *English Language Teaching Journal*, Vol XXXIII, no. 2, January 1979

JOHNSON, K (1977)
'Why are foreign students incoherent?' in Holden, S. ed. (1977), *English for Special purposes*

KAPLAN, R (1976)
'A further note on contrastive rhetoric', in *Communication Quarterly*, Vol 24, no. 2, Spring 1976

LAMBTON, A K S (1953)
Persian Grammar

MATTHEWS, A J (1976)
'Some features of modern Persian syntax likely to cause L1 interference in the learning of English syntax', Manchester University (ms)

NAFISI, S (1953)
Shāhkārhā-ye nathr-e Fārsi-ye moᶜaser, Tehran

PURJAVADI, N (1976)
'Ensān-e injā-yi,' in *Negin*, year 12, no. 1375, 1976, Tehran.

TOFIGH, F (1976)
'Development of Iran: a statistical note' in Jacqz, ed. *Iran: Past,present & future*, Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies.

YARMOHHAMADI, L (1977)
'Nazari-ye beh barnāmeh-ye rizi-ye zabāni va mesāᶜl-e zabān āmuzi dar Irān, in *Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, Pahlavi University, Vol 1, no. 1, Fall 1977

ZONIS, M (1971)
The political elite of Iran, Princeton

STUDY MODES AND STUDENTS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

Tony Dudley-Evans, University of Birmingham
John Swales, University of Aston in Birmingham

We take it that this seminar is in part a response to the fact that the increase in numbers of overseas students in this country is a phenomenon noted in passing but largely ignored for serious study by that part of the academic community that has a professional interest in developing and improving tertiary-level studies in the UK. For instance, at the Society for Research into Higher Education's 1977 Annual Conference (on the theme 'Course Design and Student Learning') concern was expressed that course plans talk almost invariably about 'the student', 'implying that planners were using one model for the subject of the exercise and that "course instruction" for this model student might be seriously prejudicial to students who were very different in background and motivation from this ideal type'. Among the groups conceded as being different from the academic stereotype of immediately post-adolescent white male with a conventional UK education, the overseas student was mentioned only in passing, whilst other groups such as mature British students, or those from ethnic minorities in this country all received more detailed attention. Nor was there any recognition in the conference proceedings that overseas students should not be considered as a coherent and monolithic grouping. However, it is one of the purposes of this seminar to try and take cognizance of the fact that such students may indeed be different, and in this paper to concentrate on the numerically preponderant grouping of students loosely defined as coming from the Middle East. We wish then to explore the 'education shock' commonly experienced by such students when entering the British higher education system; the 'education shock' caused by a gulf between what they have become accustomed to and to what they need rather rapidly to become accustomed to. In the first part of this paper we concentrate on one or two aspects of academic study modes in the Middle East itself; we then take up some of the linguistic and rhetorical characteristics of Arabic, the major native language of the region, and explore the bearing they have on the linguistic performance and orientation of Middle East students studying in a British environment. Thus we deal first with inherited modes of study and then with inherited modes of expression.

However, before attempting even a crude and necessarily over-generalized assessment of what higher secondary and first degree Middle East education is like, we would wish to make two general qualifications, and raise one problematic issue that we believe to have important ramifications for the future. The first qualification is that we are not concerned with Middle East students who have already been exposed to Western education, either through the process of taking A levels' in this country, or through such genuine enclaves of Western education in the Middle East such as the Israeli

Universities, the American Universities in Cairo and Beirut and probably the University of Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran. Secondly it is well to bear in mind 'educational shock' can be equally caused by historical as well as geographical or cultural distances; for instance, the Oxbridge undergraduate of 20 years ago would find much to re-orientate towards in the ways of teaching, learning and assessment practised in the more educationally experimental of today's university departments. The important and unresolved issue is whether the current differences between Middle East education and Western education are inevitably a reflection of differences in social, moral, and ideological codes or whether they signify little more than a generation gap. In other words, should we interpret differences between Western and Middle Eastern educational practices as being the differering products of, on the one hand, an Islamicized Near Eastern educational milieu and, on the other, a secularized European or North American tradition, or should we conclude that modes of study and modes of expression commonly accepted and practised in the Middle East today are in a surprising number of ways similar to those existing in the West 50 years ago (the teacher as authority, a respect for the acquisition of facts, a style of writing in the tradition of 'belles lettres', etc.)? In effect, are we observing a contrast between youth and maturity of educational institutions, or observing radically different conceptions of the function and execution of higher education? This is an issue both intrinsically complex and arising from conflicting evidence, but the priorities that the Middle East higher education sets itself during the next decade or so will be a major factor in determining whether the Western and Islamic attitudes converge or diverge.

If we now look at Middle East undergraduate education today, we are soon struck (as elsewhere, especially in the third world) by the existence of two parallel systems. There is typically both a formal order and an informal order. The formal order is how the institution is expected to operate as is described in communications made by the institution's authorities. This formal order typically reflects a Western approach and Western-style admission and selection procedures, course planning, decision-making and administration and research objectives, along with more or less international requirements about use of the library, the role of lectures, cultural activities and so on. The informal order is how the institution is actually operated by lecturers, students and the lower-level administrators. This informal order is much more than simply expedient ways of coping with the system. A simple illustration of this is the question of 'medium of instruction'. In a surprising number of cases the formal order will lay down that English (or French) is to be the medium of instruction, whereas the informal order will find ways of replacing this in less exposed and visible contexts by the first language. Again, the formal order may make certain limited claims that selection in areas such as Medicine and Architecture will be partly determined by interview and a consideration of special aptitude. In fact, any concept of vocational guidance, or even in many cases any concept of the personal preference of individual students, is eroded by the parental consensus of the academic professional 'league table'. As a result, the best students go to Medicine or Engineering, then Applied Sciences, then Pure, then Social Sciences, then Arts, with only Law having a variable position throughout the region. Thus we have known medical students who were unable to stand the sight of blood having great difficulty in transferring out of the faculty that their excellent academic results had pre-determined them for, and we have met Architecture students with high mathematical ability but unfortunately little visual talent at all.

There are other factors that tend to push student study behaviour away from that desired by the educational planners. The third world extended-family social security system means that many students shoulder family responsibilities inconceivable in the West; the bright poor students in non-OPEC countries know that they will never be free from continual personal and financial sacrifices and that their role in life will be to establish a power-base (a network of useful contacts and a source of finance) for their less educated relations. They thus adopt a policy of 'safety-first' - slow to question the teaching of superiors and quick to absorb every piece of information pertaining to a subject that they personally might not have chosen.

Another factor that reinforces these symptoms is the continuing existence of pre-Western educational traditions. Islamic education has a clear concept of the scholar-teacher, often peripatetic, concerned with abstractions, divorced from the application of knowledge to the solution of practical problems, continuing a verbalistic tradition of scholarship that is more of a personal odyssey than a maximization of an individual's potential. It is concepts such as these that inform the Middle Eastern student's belief that reaching the end of the Western education, the doctorate, is a quantitative not a qualitative achievement. A PhD requires time (and money) and effort; if a normal individual has these he should succeed. Just as there is little concept of vocational guidance so there is little concept that an individual is wasting his time by trying to go beyond a particular educational level; after all, the full 17-year Azhar course is open to all who wish to attempt it. To say to a student from the region that he has succeeded at master's level but is not acceptable for a doctorate is in Middle East eyes both arbitrary and contradictory.

Thus, the Middle East learning environment on the one hand encourages and rewards the accumulation of knowledge - indeed often its retention in the exact form in which it was originally presented - and so feeds off the long tradition of memorization and rote-learning central to the Koranic school, whilst, on the other hand, it is rather unconcerned about the learner's personal response to courses, ambivalent about the appropriacy of critical discussion and comment and typically uninterested in seeing the theoretical material applied to relevant situations in the 'real world' of the contemporary environment. This rote-learning, verbalistic student response receives further impetus where the medium of instruction is not the first language and where the dramatic quantitative expansion of Middle East higher education in the last 15 years has led to a widening of the ability range, accentuated shortages of staff and facilities and emphasized weaknesses in educational administration.

There is not space here to give more than one concrete illustration of how the informal practical order overcomes the formal orders' requirements and in so doing forces the institutional authorities to accept a mode of student study behaviour that it is fundamentally unhappy with, but (albeit reluctantly) increasingly willing to settle for. We have chosen the study mode context of revision for examinations.

The method of preparing for examinations is essentially one of memorization, and two techniques are in common use. The first is a read-recite technique, and any visitor to the Middle East at School Certificate time will find open spaces full of students perambulating up and down memorizing their text books or notes by a process of vocalized reading and recall. In some areas, of which Tabriz is one, this process is so structured that the individual assigns himself two fixed points at a convenient distance apart and reads aloud on the way from A to B and recites what he has read on the way back from B to A. The other common technique is a read-copy-recopy sedentary process. In the Sudan, this system derives from the use of the **loh** (a wooden board of similar function to a slate) for learning important passages of the Koran, and other memorabilia. This memorization by repeated copying is preserved even at University level as part of the informal order's attempts to surmount the English language barrier, the high informational content of courses and the shortage of textbooks. The students obtain the trimmings from the University's press and copy onto them in the manner shown in Appendix 1 sections from textbooks, or from notes, either the student's own, or more frequently borrowed from a colleague. The multiple copying of technical terms is illustrative of the reliance on the 'word' as given, and the fact that the trimming strips are always discarded after a revision session shows how thorough has been the process of internalization.

Although both techniques are highly effective ways of committing information to memory, observation and anecdotal evidence strongly indicate that information stored by such techniques cannot easily be retrieved in a selective way or used in a manner supportive of a particular line of argument. thus we typically find the practical informal system producing semi-appropriate examination answers, which the formal order can do little else but accept as being adequate.

With the foregoing in mind, it is not difficult to imagine the range of adaptations that a Middle Eastern student from a traditional home institution has to make on his arrival at a British university. Of the adaptations required one that produces particular problems is the need to adjust to the conventions of British academic writing, and it is this which we wish to explore in the remainder of this paper. In the first place, there seems little doubt that students whose language and culture is European enjoy an advantage, at least initially, denied to those whose background is in the Middle East. The Arab student can find few lexical cognates apart from loan words; further, the generation of morphological patterns extending from the trilateral root produces quite different semantic arrays of connection and separation from those which occur in European languages. For instance, from the basic root k - t -b is generated a whole range of items which we would not necessarily associate in English such as 'to write', 'to correspond with', 'office', 'library', 'book', 'bookshop', 'letter', 'clerk', 'Koranic school'. Conversely, the Arabic equivalents of 'student' and 'study' come from quite different roots. Moreover, the classification of both parts of speech and sentences is based on rather different criteria and produces very different end results from those accepted in Western European languages, and the Arab student is trained in conventions and traditions of writing that differ markedly from the traditions of composition and argumentation in Britain. The purely syntactic differences emerging from traditional techniques of contrastive analysis are also relevant, not only because they can give the reader an erroneous impression of carelessness but also becase certain types of interference error can lead to difficulties of comprehension. For this reason, and because differences in sentence structure are not unconnected with differences in discourse structure, we list a few here:

a The nominal or verbless sentence

With timeless, factual observations there is no copula in surface structure; and possession is indicated by prepositional forms rather than a verb like 'have', eg this direct translation from Arabic -

'For the Republic of the Sudan now 15 provinces'.

b Tense System

Arabic is generally considered to have only two tenses: The Perfect, which is used for actions completed at the time to which reference is being made, and The Imperfect, which is used for actions which are not completed. Although there are means of expressing continuous actions, the past perfect or futurity if the speaker wishes to state these explicitly, there is not the precision in tenses required in English. Arab students therefore have problems with the correct use of continuous forms, the past perfect, and the distinction between the present perfect and the past.

c The generic use of the definite article

Arabic in this sense is similar to Romance languages. Arab students thus produce general statements in such forms as 'The society is complicated'.

d **Noun phrases**

Arabic will place the key word at the beginning of the phrase rather than at the end as in English. Thus we have 'the battery car' rather than 'the car battery'.

e **Relative Clauses**

The Arabic relative particle التي الذي (= who, which, that) belongs to the main clause as the modification of the noun antecedent and not to the clause as in English. Thus, where the noun is indefinite the relative particle is omitted:

He had a son he accompanied him on his holidays'

Only where the noun is definite is the relative particle used:

'This is the son who accompanied him'

As the relative particle belongs to the main clause, the antecedent is represented in the relative clause by a resumptive personal pronoun. Thus we have:

'This is the man whom I met him yesterday'

'This is the woman who I spoke to her yesterday'.

This accounts for the unnecessary insertion of pronouns in relative clauses in English by many Arabic speakers.

These are largely problems of sentence structure which can be overcome given an awareness on the part of the teacher of the reasons for errors. A more serious problem is brought about by the very different conventions for essay writing in Arabic. Kaplan (1966) pointed out that many overseas students proficient in the structures of English write essays or reports considered by their instructors to be badly organized or to lack coherence. The impression of poor organization may in fact result from confusion arising from odd syntactic and lexical choices reinforced by under-pointing of the argument. Kaplan goes on to suggest that paragraph organization in English tends to be quite different from that of many languages and the appearance of lack of organization or coherence may be the result of students' using a style which does not accord with English conventions.

The 'word by word' literal translation of the article from an Arabic newspaper quoted below on the left provides an example of a very different approach to the development of an argument. On the right we have presented an attempt to paraphrase the article thereby producing a more usual journalistic style. Comparison of the two approaches shows how the same basic content may be handled in different ways. The Arabic version begins with two topic sentences but thereafter it makes its points very largely by a series of loosely connected anecdotal facts, many of which reiterate earlier points. The English approach is much more one of Situation ⟶ Evidence ⟶ Exemplification. In the opinion of the author a clear picture of the situation emerges from both versions and one cannot consider one to be superior to the other.

General Translation	**How an English article might deal with the Subject**
The Islamic revolution in Iran has recreated anxiety in the neighbouring countries in the area. And the Soviet Union is watching with anxiety the Islamic movement which has begun to spread on its southern borders. And the Kremlin is watching with obvious anxiety what is happening in Afghanistan where the Leftist government is fighting a war against dissidents in the Muslim tribes. And Farid Coleman the head of the Newsweek office in the Soviet Union observed when visiting some exteme tension and efforts to strengthen the armed forces in the areas of the southern borders. The visitor to Ashkabad in the south of the Soviet Union can see two groups of soldiers parading in the streets in their uniform. The first group is wearing summer uniform which is suitable for the high temperature in Ashkabad. As for the second group, it is wearing a heavy uniform which is only suitable for the winter which is still prevalent in the northern part of the Soviet Union. And it is difficult to see members of these two groups mixing in the streets of Ashkabad which indicates that they belong to different groups which have not been together for long enough to establish friendships. And is is worthy of mention that the changes of locality and movements of armies in the Soviet Union is surrounded by extreme secrecy and is considered a state secret but the inhabitants of Ashkabad will inform you that extra forces have arrived recently from Moscow to strengthen the forces situated on the borders. And all the articles published in the Soviet Press in the week before last indicate the anxiety of the Kremlin about the new alliances opposed to communism in the area. And the Soviet leadership fears that the Islamic movement will spread into the Soviet Union where there are thirty million Muslims.	The Islamic revolution in Iran has created neighbouring countries in the area, in particular the Soviet Union. Evidence of this was given by Farid Coleman, the head of the Newsweek office in the Soviet Union, who has been travelling in some of the Muslim areas of the Soviet Union. He observed extreme tension in the area, and, in particular, that the armed forces seemed to have been strengthened in recent weeks. He noticed several signs of the recent and sudden arrival of one group of the army, this group being in a winter uniform totally inappropriate for the high temperature of Ashkabad, and also evidently unacquainted with other Army groups. Evidence of the size of the build up in the Muslim areas is given by the fact that the arrival of reinforcements, normally kept very secret, is well known to the inhabitants. The Soviet leadership seems to view with great anxiety the development in the area of new alliances opposed to communism, and seems to fear that the Islamic movement may spread to the Soviet Union itself where there are thirty million Muslims. The Kremlin is, therefore, watching with great anxiety events in Afghanistan where the leftist government is fighting a war, against dissidents in the Muslim tribes.

Other features of the Arabic version are interesting; such as the very different use of 'and', and the length of the sentences.

It is the transference of these features to the writing of academic English which can lead to the appearance of incoherence described above. The essay on tissue culture quoted in the appendix is a good example. It was written by an Arab student who had been in Britain for some time and is now studying for an MSc. The student has covered the essential points but the style of writing strikes the English reader as over-complicated and diffuse. The essay is not broken up into paragraphs, the sentences are extremely long and there are several instances of the use of redundant phrases, which will repeat the previous idea.

A more detailed consideration of some of the components of Arabic writing style may give an explanation of why so many of the faults of the essay occur. Kaplan states that one of the main features of a paragraph in Arabic and Semitic languages is the build up of ideas through parallel construction. Kaplan's examples from the King James' version of the Old Testament are the most easily understood:

a His descendants will be mighty in the land

and

The generation of the upright will be blessed

b For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous

but

The way of the wicked shall perish.

This parallelism is frequently produced by the use of two words or phrases with overlapping meaning. The following literal translation from a modern novel gives an idea of this:

والنساني ترى عامر لا يحس العصمت ولا يملن اليه

(Taha Husain (الايام))

Women in the villages of Egypt do not like silence and are not inclined towards it.

(rather than 'Women in Egypt tend to be talkative. . . . .')

Another feature of literature argumentation is the relatively narrow range of connectors used. Equivalents of most English connectors do exist and are used, for example, in translations of English textbooks but in other works use is restricted to the equivalents of 'and' 'so' 'but' (لكن فـ و) .

There is a developed system for deciding which of these is acceptable in a particular context. For example, the main difference between 'wa' and 'fa' is that the former joins equally important clauses or sentences without necessarily showing any internal arrangement between them, whereas the latter does imply an arrangement in the 'narrative'. It is often most accurately translated as 'and so' or 'thus'. The use of 'wa' means that it often appears in contexts unacceptable in English. In Naguib Mahfuz's *'Al-Qahira-al-Jadida'* it is the first word in thirty five of the forty six chapters. Its use there is to emphasise that the new chapter does not imply a break in continuity. Moreover, 'wa' is often used to connect sentences in adversative relationship. The Literal translation of:

من لأنها لا تعيش بنفسها ولنفسها وانما تعيش بالرجل وللرجل

For she (woman) does not live through herself and for herself and only through and for her man.[1]

Surface feature of bland coordination expounded by 'wa' disguises variable means of 'wa' in particular contexts, for example subordinate clauses in English often **become** coordinate clauses linked by 'wa' in Arabic. Thus:

'I saw her child by her bed crying bitterly'

could become: رأيتها فتاها الى جانبها وتبكي بكاء مرا [2]

literally:

I saw her child by her bed and she was crying bitterly.

(In Arabic it is often only possible to recognize that one clause is subordinated through the use of tense or through the logical relationship between the clauses.)

Reference back to previous sentences or ideas and the introduction of new topics is often done by devices which in English seem awkward. Phrases equivalent to 'it is worthy of mention that . . . . . . ' 'As for . . . . . . ' 'with regard to . . . . . . ' are often used. A number of writers, especially Lewkowick (1971) have noted how Arabic sentences sometimes follow topic + comment structure, which consists of an initial definite noun phrase, which is the topic, followed by a comment clause with a presumptive personal pronoun. Lewkowicz gives as an example:

---

[1] Translation from Ahmad Amin Duka 'l Islam' Cairo 1952 quoted in V Cantarine *'Syntax of Modern Arabic Prose III'*. Indiana 1975 p.19.

[2] Al-Msnfaluti in *'A Reader in Modern Literary Arabic*
J Ziadeh, Princeton University, 1964, quoted in
ibid p. 246

الولد أبوه مات

The boy - - - - - - - - - his father died.

In the literal translation of the newspaper article we see

'As for the second group, it is wearing a heavy uniform'.

Modern Arabic has of course adapted its structure quite considerably to the expression of modern thought. However most undergraduate students in Arab countries will rarely have been asked to imitate styles coming into existence at higher levels of scholarship and the way of developing their arguments is more likely to have been affected by the conventions described in this paper.

We have concentrated very much on the differences in academic and linguistic convention between Arab and British universities, rather than on the ways in which many universities in Arab countries are modernising their whole approach to teaching and learning. We feel this to be justified because Arab students entering British universities are likely to have been exposed to a fairly traditional environment. This is not to argue that Arab students cannot adapt successful strategies for study but rather that most will need to adjust their expectations and their study habits considerably if they are to succeed. This period of adjustment is of course crucial. One example which may appear trivial but may in fact be quite significant is that Arab students may be taken unawares by the complete start in the first week of term and the great importance attached to the first term's work, which is quite the opposite of what happens in many Arab institutions. A number of students in Birmingham University seem to fall so far behind in the first term that they are unable to catch up. We have had examples of able MSc students being put back onto a preliminary year because they are unaware that their performance is being assessed in the first weeks of the first term. Other examples, many of them foreshadowed in the earlier part of this paper, include problems with note-taking, independent study, revision strategies, library searches, and relatively informal personal relationships with tutors and supervisors. Nonetheless we feel that we are by no means alone in being impressed by the way in which most Arab students cope with their studies. They do face difficulties often at a relatively late stage in life, and yet there is no evidence that the majority fare any less well than other groups.

References

BEESTON, A F L
The Arabic Language Today Hutchinson University Library, London 1970

BILLING, DAVID
(ed.) *Cover design and student learning*, The Society for Research into Higher Education Ltd, Guildford, 1978

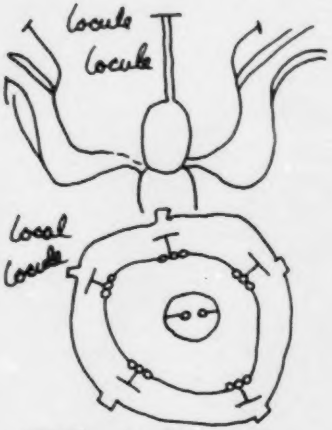
CANTARINO, V
A Syntax of Modern Arabic Prose III Indiana, 1975

DOUGLAS, DAN
From School to University Khartoum University Press 1977

KAPLAN, ROBERT B
'Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-Cultural Education' in Language Learning Vol. XVI Nos. 3 and 4 1966

LEWKOWICZ, NANCY K
'Topic-Comment and Relative Clause in Arabic' in Language Vol. 47, 1971 pp. 810-825

Appendix 1



ovary ovary ovary
ovary or Septa Septa
Septa / Septa
Septa / Septa ✓ Septa
Septa
Septa / Septa Septa
Septa Septa Septa
Septa / Septa Septa
Septa

portion of the ovary
wall to which ovary
are attached

Parietal placentation
Parietal Placentation
Placentation Parietal
Placentation
parietal Placentation
Parietal Placentation
Parietal Placentation
Pair is on..........
Chalaza
distal end of the
rapha chalaza called
chalaza chalaza

DIMENSIONS OF STRIP

width: 6.5cm
Length: 66cm
(not all shown)

REPETITIONS ON PIECE ILLUSTRATED

Ovary: 4
Septa: 18
Darietal
placentum: 6
Chalaza: 4

The propagation of tissue culture is more useful in terms of storage without infection of disease and we can control it easly such meristem tissue culture contractly we can control or storage our material in traditional method of propagation free disease. The second point that we can eliminate disease infection in propagation of crops traditionally where as it can be eliminate such disease by using sterile organs in vitro tube culture. Another point in comparison between traditional methods and tissue culture that is the easy of movement material in the latter method especially when we need to transform germ plasm from one part to another part or from country to another country while it is very difficult or we can say imposible to transfer our propagated material with traditional using method and also we will face many problems, such spread disease by these propagated materials because they are not under our control in terms of disease (bacteria, fungus, viruses). The most important point is in this sence is economics terms, this will depend on the discion of demand and kinds of species which we want to propagate ie some methods of traditional methods need more equipments, labours and time whereas it doesn't needs these things in propagation tissue culture or other way round that it not useful tissue culture with some species and not economic because it needs training and some expensive material like hormones.

THE BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS FROM THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT

Roger Bowers,The British Council, London

Introduction

If one were to approach a full cultural profile of a given community, presumably typical humour would figure somewhere in the features studied. While I do not propose, for reasons which I hope to make clear to offer such a profile, it is nevertheless useful for the points which I do wish to make to begin with a typical North Indian 'Sardarji' joke, (which I use with no anti-communal intent). The well-known Sardarji Balram Singh had been given a fine new picture to hang in his house. So he asked his son to fetch a hammer and nail and help him hang the picture. His son brought them, and Balram set a chair against the wall. Imagine his surprise when his son, climbing onto the chair, began to hammer the nail into the wall with the **point** of the nail nearest the hammer and the **head** of the nail against the wall. 'You foolish boy,' he cried, turning and pointing across the room, '**this** nail is for **that** wall.'

I have the uncomfortable feeling that in defining 'cultural profiles' as our topic for the exploration of the learning problems of overseas students we are somehow committing a similar error. We are perhaps setting ourselves a relevant task, but choosing the wrong wall as the object of our attention.

Other papers presented during this seminar have hit some good nails squarely on the head. My own contribution will be to question the use of the term 'cultural profile' by considering four possible areas of discussion (four walls) relevant to the problem with which we are concerned. The areas are: culture; education; the individual as shaped by culture and education; and the environment into which that individual is put. Reference will be made to the Indian context where my experience of that context , restricted to teaching and living in Northern and Eastern India, justifies it.

Culture

This is a broad, potent and ambiguous term, in the discussion and use of which the assistance of real sociologists and anthropologists would be of value. Certain factors do, however, seem undeniably relevant to the notion of culture, and discussion here is restricted to these.

To begin with, then, **age.** I would suggest that the Indian reaction to age is distinctive in two ways. First, there is a respect for age against youth, irrespective of individual merit and qualifications. Second, it is a characteristic of many Indian families that children become used to routine domestic responsibilities at a very early age (a result, I suspect, of large family contexts, where children have willy-nilly to help to look after younger brothers and sisters and help in the household chores: I am speaking, of course, of families where the supply of domestic servants does not allow abdication of this responsibility). In the British context, the implications of age are less clear-cut. Certainly there is less general respect for the older person, more need for the older person to prove his credentials. In the case of the mature student (a topic which has cropped up elsewhere in seminar discussion) few would wish to state categorically that maturity equates in all cases either with rigidity of concepts or with worldly-wise flexibility: both effects seem to be possible in individual cases.

In general the relevance of age to the educational context seems to be four-fold, in terms of the inhibitions which age may bring with it in the essentially youthful institutional environment; the social competence which maturity may have acquired; the experience which the more mature may be able to bring to bear upon academic questions; and the readiness which students show to question the views of their older, and 'better', teachers.

Next, **sex.** This varies very much according to the individual 'class' and 'educational' background of the individual student. There will certainly be many students whose upbringing has been considerably more strict in terms of contact with the opposite sex than that normal in Britain. But again two qualifications are necessary. First, it is by no means certain that the attitude of British students to the opposite sex is culturally bound: individual differences have been known to appear and these are only partly attributable to upbringing and education! Secondly, it seems as likely that a 'sheltered' upbringing will bring a positive reaction to sexual mixing and availability as that it will lead to unease and negative effects. The Indian novel is evidence enough of the range of possible reactions. The educational relevance of the sexual environment is, then, ambivalent.

As far as **religion** is concerned, this factor is both more dominant and more individual. While the system of beliefs which (for example) a Hindu or Sikh or Muslim or Buddist - or even an Indian Christian - carries may in many cases be more influential upon his activities than the beliefs of the average British student (and I believe myself that this **is** a reasonable generalization), the influence that these beliefs in fact have cannot be defined. The most likely influence of religion upon the performance of overseas students in Britain is, indeed, the indirect and negative one, that the loss of contact with co-religionists and perhaps with the religious routine of festivals and daily duties (see below) may contribute to the general loss of confidence which entry into a new environment can in many cases engender.

Social and family norms are a major factor in cultural identification. Yet in practice these norms are identifiably with groups or classes within a community rather than with the society as a whole. It would be reasonable

106

to argue that such norms in India include the notion of the extended family; the existence within the family of ties of respect and obligation (and indeed control) stronger than in the contemporary British family. At the same time, separation from the bosom of the family for reasons of study or employment seems to be more easily accepted in Indian families than in British ones. There are, of course, obvious problems, such as would meet any individual in an analogous situation. Absence from the family nest, if it is the first such separation in an individual's experience, can lead to some lack of security. There are in addition particular problems for the student who brings his family (perhaps his wife and children) with him when, as is not infrequent even now in the Indian context, the wife is less well educated and less socially mobile than the husband. In general, however, all that can be said regarding social and family norms is that the attitudes in Indian contexts are scarcely less disparate and subject to individual differences than those in Britain.

The **living routine** is, however, one area where cultural differences might support generalizations. It is reasonable to suggest (again on only subjective evidence) that the Indian day is more organized, in general, than the routine which British people - and students in particular - follow. Thus, both domestic and more spiritual considerations structure the passing of time more rigidly: in the long term, the observance of fasts and holidays; in the daily programme, the importance of puja, of food preparation; of rising and taking to bed etc. The freedom from such constraints, or more correctly the absence from an environment in which such routines are common and patent, can no doubt have a disorienting effect. (Conversely, the ability to impose and follow a personal daily regimen can be of value in student life.) In contrast, the British practice is so variant as to defy generalization.

Finally, for present purposes, it may be useful to consider the **language** factor, since language is (however Whorfian or not we may be) clearly closely connected with cultural factors. Again in general, it may be reasonable to suggest that the Indian upbringing is likely to lean a student towards the oral skills of language, towards rhetoric, and towards extended rather than compact language use. (Like all generalizations, this one is dangerous.) With reference to the English language, it will not be unreasonable to expect that an individual's competence will be greater in the receptive than in the productive skills, though I hasten to add that I could name many Indian friends and acquaintances who would put my 'productive command of English' to shame. The competence of British students, in literacy and oracy, of course varies, and it would be dangerous to assume that home-grown students do not on occasion show shortcomings in one or both fields.

There are clearly, in the area of language, direct implications for educational approaches and performance. Generalization again, however, seems elusive. In sum, then restricting myself to the above cultural factors (and there are others - music, health, historical and geographical sense, materialism, aesthetics etc.) I hold back from the cultural stereotype. I am against the stereotype in all circumstances; and particularly against the stereotype based on cultural factors.

It may be entertaining, if not instructive, to offer an example of an Indian stereotype of a British type:

> The British Council occupied a large house with wrought iron window grilles and spacious enclosed verandahs on Theatre Road, off Camac Street. Its gardens were well maintained and its gatekeeper salaamed Sanjay as he stepped out of his tiny car. It pleased Sanjay immensely to be greeted by wardens of such public places. He managed a smile in return in spite of his nervousness.
>
> He was greeted at the main door by Mr Worthington, a pale Londoner with a slight trace of dandruff. Mr Worthington prided himself in being one of a new breed of British Council directors and sought opportunities to inform the Indians that he had gone to Essex rather than Oxford or Cambridge. He was essentially a kind, if rather innocent young man, who liked to wear Indian dress on Sundays and eat curry with his fingers.
>
> Looking spry in a blue Italian shirt and striped pants, Sanjay cut through the crowd to a knot of British Council regulars. . . .
>
> Mr Worthington was coughing to get his attention. Mr Worthington's fiancee (Sanjay knew Worthington slept with her on weekends and he enjoyed his own tolerance of such lasciviousness) was playing a few bars from the popular song 'Oh, Why Can't the English Learn to Speak?' on an old piano. The audience was appreciative of her talent and choice, and amid this knowing hilarity the debate commenced.
>
> 'Ladies and gentlemen, charming ladies and witty gentlemen,' began the Englishman, leaning awkwardly across a low table where he had placed a pitcher of iced water, a bell and an alarm clock. 'Perhaps by the end of the evening, if the motion wins, I shall be saying Bhai ebong bon or bhaio boheno . . .'
>
> The audience did not recognize the actual Bengali or Hindi phrase cowering under the young man's thick London accent, but they recognized the goodness of his intentions and clapped madly.

Bharati Mukherjee: The Tiger's Daughter:
© Chatto & Windus : London : 1973

While the stereotype of 'the Englishman' is uncomfortable in some particulars, we would, I suspect, no more recognize its general validity for British Council officers (let alone the nation at large) than we would assume that all Indians of a particular generation and background wear a blue Italian shirt and striped pants. Yet the image is, none the less, vivid and therefore dangerous. It is worth guarding against partial truths of this kind.

Even, however, if we are able to produce the accurate stereotype of a given community - a full cultural profile with its individual manifestations defined - there is still no procedure for the contrastive analysis of such profiles. That is to say, we cannot move logically from such a profile to consideration of its implications, including its implications for individuals studying in Britain.

Education

It may be reasonable to expect differences of a regular kind between communities in the educational environment or educational set into which they fit their young people. If such differences existed, they would of course, in addition to being generally influential, also be directly relevant to pedagogic considerations such as we are conerned with.

In fact, the findings of interaction research, which I take to be the most reliable means of comparing educational practices, indicate much more cross-cultural similarity in school-level education than diversity. There is, of course, diversity **within** state systems - within India as much as within Britain. But the archetypal procedures and settings, in (for example) Britain, America, India, Scandinavia, Western Europe, are considerably closer than is normally assumed. There is, however, one major difference between Indian and British settings, which more extensive research could be expected to confirm. This is that in the general Indian context, from Primary school through to University, partly because of the pressure of student numbers, education is **never** individualized. The uniformity of approach, the treatment of the student always as the member of a group without offering the opportunity for individual creativity, tends to be reinforced through syllabus, examinations, teaching approaches, parent attitudes, training procedures and methods of inspection and administration. It is easy to overestimate the extent to which the individual student in school in Britain is able to develop freely: but certainly in **some** primary schools and **some** sixth forms, and rarely in **some** secondary schools, education is personalized. In general, however, there is a secondary school slump in personalization, corresponding with a slump in motivation and morale, which closes the gap at this level between Indian and British (and other) classroom and examination procedures.

Running through the factors of the educational setting, however, what differentiating factors can be identified?

To take **content**, it can be assumed that the effect of selection through scholarship application, vetting and British selection procedures narrows any gap which might exist, though particular subjects may be handled in different ways. English literature, for example, might indicate a greater emphasis in the Indian tradition on classical rather than contemporary authors. In general, the difference will be one of focus rather than one of level (though the experience recounted elsewhere in this seminar regarding physics students questions this view).

The **intensity and duration** of school and college education is best summarized by the 10 + 2 + 3 formula, which most Indian states follow exactly or loosely (it should be remembered that education is mainly a State rather than a Union responsibility). That is to say, ten years of basic schooling leads to two years of pre-university education and a three-year first degree. Students entering postgraduate courses in Britain will normally also have followed a postgraduate course in India, generally of two years. (Most will therefore, if proceeding direct to university studies in Britain, be not less than 23 years old.) Generalizations here, however, are dangerous, since the quality of instruction offered may very considerably, even though the same basic qualification has been granted. A pass from one of the prestige colleges in Calcutta, Presidency College, for example, will be qualitatively different from a pass in the same subject offered by the same University following attendance at one of the rural constituent colleges of the University. One must, of course, avoid prejudging against students in the less well endowed colleges; but such variation is undeniable, and is only partly evident through the pass marks obtained.

The **freedom** of students to plan their own learning and to select and pursue options within a course is in general more limited in Indian universities than in Britain. The notion of the assignment or part-thesis is particularly uncommon, again largely because of pressures of numbers. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that Calcutta University (to pursue the example with which I am most familiar) has over 60,000 external students (more than Britain's Open University) - students who pursue their studies within the same curriculum as the full-time students and are entirely responsible for their own progress. While their achievement may in many cases be less than fully adequate, it would again be less than fair to write off individual students because of shortcomings in the structure of the system within which they have to study.

Indian students will, except in rare cases, not be familiar with the range of **resources** which is available to students from British institutions. There is no doubt that the study skills attendant on the availability of good reference sources (University libraries etc.) do require development.

Evaluation measures, while not dissimilar from British procedures, tend to be more closely related in the Indian context to the actual content of teaching than is the case in Britain. A greater reliance is thus placed on the ability to memorize what has been taught, either through direct attendance or by working from second-hand notes. Here again (as been recognized elsewhere in this seminar) familiarization with a different rationale may be needed if Indian students are to transfer effectively to the new educational environment.

There is finally the question of the **components of teaching programmes** and the expectations which are held regarding them. There are, of course, differences between subjects and between individual teachers. It is reasonable to suggest, however, the following general assessments. **Lectures,** in the Indian context, are the essential element in teaching, all-pervasive and in general informative rather than stimulative: they are likely to be less varied in structure and intent than lectures in the British context (though it would be dangerous to exaggerate the extent to which different lecturing techniques are rationally employed here). **Seminars,** where employed, are generally to large groups and are, partly as a consequence, relatively ineffective in encouraging student participation and control of direction: they tend, frequently, to develop into mini-lectures, partly because advanced assignments as focus for discussion are in many cases not a reasonable proposition. Tutorials, in the sense of very small groups involving personal interaction, are very rare. **Reading**, while often substantial, is largely unchecked and often undirected. **Term papers** and mini-assignments are rare, and where they are completed are often unchecked. Practical lessons and assignments, in the arts subjects, are rare (I cannot comment for the science subjects, but suspect that, at the undergraduate level at least, student numbers are a restricting factor.)

The overall **learning style** in Indian institutions, therefore, tends to be more passive, more concerned with the acquisition of information, more anonymous.

The Individual

This is for me a vital area of enquiry. Having thought about general cultural characteristics and educational background, we may now ask whether it is possible to generalize about the personal traits of students from the sub-continent, as they relate to studies. The questions to be asked might be along the following lines: Is the student concerned critical? criticizable? dependent? informed? intelligent? industrious? committed to his studies? adaptable? linguistically competent? comfortable in his course environment? Of course, each of these terms could be explored in some detail: notions such as dependence, adaptability, commitment, for example, would give rise to interesting discussion. The only point relevant to the current issue, however, is quite simply that these are questions which could equally be raised regarding British students or those from any other background; and there are no grounds for assuming that in most, or indeed any, of these characteristics there will be some typical profile which can be drawn. It must surely be the case that in such features individual variations will override national or cultural patterns.

There is, indeed, a real danger that too early a prediction of an individual as being a student of a particular kind can be to some extent self-fulfilling, just as research has shown that pupils who are expected by their teachers to under-achieve (this at the school level) receive less careful attention and do in fact often under-achieve as a result. We would need to avoid such a danger in any generalization we were prepared to agree on. The danger is not dissimilar to that suggested in a lookback at the British Raj in India, in which Charles Allen comments on British and Indian views of each other:

> The psychology of the two races was often described as complementary rather than matching: 'The Indian was pliant and would say 'yes' to everything whether he was going to do it or not, whereas the British were more obstinate, more obdurate people and they wouldn't undertake a thing unless they could see it through. But if the British were 'a bit Olympian or perhaps a little squirearchical, this was complemented by the attitude of the Indians towards us. They expected the Europeans to be rather superior, encouraging us to behave in that way.' Sycophancy was not something the British enjoyed. 'There was certainly a lot of sucking-up to the British,' states Ian Stephens. 'All sorts of tricks which one had to be wary about. But the wariness itself was a danger because it mightn't be what you thought. What was being misconstrued might really be genuine affection. A genuine desire for normal, human contact.'
>
> Charles Allen: Plain Tales from the Raj:*
> Futura Publications: 1975

Rather than court this danger, it might be better to avoid the temptation to generalize and hold on to the notion of the student as an individual who, while sharing certain characteristics with others, is nonetheless his own person. As Stevick puts it,

> Here is the complete human being with many-layered needs and anxieties, for whom problems at inner and usually unspoken levels often negate motivations at the external levels of academic grades or professional utility.
>
> Earl Stevick: Review of Charles Curran's
> Counselling-Learning: Language Learning
> 23/2 : 1973

The new environment

Having thought about the student, as group member and as individual, let us look now at the environment into which he is being introduced and on his performance in which he will in due course be judged. Again, a range of questions are possible. Is the study structured, recognizing that there are ways of structuring the study programme without depriving the student of responsibility? Is the course examination-oriented, remembering that examinations are not by definition incompatible with self-development or with intrinsic learning objectives? What are the instructional components of the course, compared with a student's previous experience? Who are

*© Charles Allen and the British Broadcasting Corporation

12

the instructors, and how coherent is their individual and group strategy including such matters as degree of student participation, rationale for evaluation of student work etc.? What are the incentives, extrinsic as well as intrinsic, during the course? What breaking-in procedures are there, for all students and for students new to Britain in particular? What guide is offered to the availability and use of resources, including libraries? What personal contact is there between staff and students? What group contact is there, between students and students? Is the student group of the year socially integrated and capable of assisting the more isolated student? Is the provision of welfare, including arrangements for accommodation etc., adequate?

These questions do not, then, explore the subject matter of the course concerned, or the quality of academic instruction. They explore rather the physical and personal setting within which study takes place. A stock-taking of this kind can be a valuable exercise.

Conclusion

I am suggesting, then, that rather than focus merely on the student entering study in Britain, and in particular rather than trying to attach to him certain pre-existing characteristics out of some broad description of his 'cultural background', it would be more profitable to focus on any of the three other 'walls': on purely educational factors, where **some** (but not much) generalization is possible and where direct relevance to pedagogic questions is clear; on individual factors, given that none of the generalizations which we make in other areas are likely to be so safe as to allow prejudgment for a particular student; and finally on ourselves and the environment, of which we as teachers are a part, which we offer to new students.

Such investigation would, it seems to me, be more profitable than attempting to draw together common features regarding a sub-continent in which the only country with which I am even partially familiar -India - consists of some 600 million people, over 20 states and territories with their own educational programmes, a wide range of major and minor language communities, five major religions, and the inevitable range of social and economic backgrounds.

A recent anthology of Indian poetry in English, notable for the variety of its contents - an assertion in itself of individuality - includes the following short poem:

I PREDICT

in history's thirtieth century
careful pruning of branch and root
controlled feed through a pipette
and great scientific patience
shall raise
perfect forests of bonsai men
grown in trays
God might easily place
on his window sill
passing his jeweller hand
over each brilliant little ego gem
set in the walls of a pocket
New Jerusalem

Rosemary Pinto: in P Lal (ed.):
Indian Poetry in English:
Writers Workshop Calcutta: 1971

I would not for a moment suggest that the theme of this Conference runs the risk of such God-like behaviour. There is undoubtedly value in attempting to define patterns of educational variation between groups from different educational systems. To look to the undefined area of 'culture', however, for correlation with - or possibly an explanation of - such patterns seems to me both impracticable and unprofitable. Can we define what we mean by the 'British culture', for example? Even if we could do so, would we have any means of drawing implications for the study habits of an individual British student? I doubt it.

It seems to me that the other three walls are the ones which it is worth chipping away at.

References

Bligh D A
Teaching Students: EUTS Exeter: 1975

Altman H B (ed.)
Foreign Language Learning-Meeting Communicative Needs: Pergamon Oxford (forthcoming)

Times of India
Directory and Yearbook

While I am entirely responsible for the views and judgments above, I am grateful to Mrs Dhun Prasad of the Department of Linguistic Science, University of Reading and of the Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore for preliminary discussion on this topic.

RESEARCH INTO FACTORS AFFECTING ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

This section explores the intractable question of the relative extent to which linguistic handicaps and inappropriate cultural attitude may vitiate optimal academic performance. Brew's contribution, based on a survey of overseas students undertaking an Open University course in Electrical Engineering at Essex University, stresses quite clearly the role that cultural problems play in academic performance and the need to orientate students adequately. James and Greenall both look closely at the link between language proficiency and actual academic performance. James clearly demonstrates the statistical link between a knowledge of the language system as measured in 'a somewhat old-fashioned structure-based test' and actual communicative competence, the latter proven by success in specialist subjects; the nature of the actual casual relationships obtaining, however, remains outside the scope of the paper, although some speculations are made. Greenall describes some of the linguistic features in a set of examination scripts from overseas students, and in addition produces some evidence which may support the present of inadequate and unrealistic academic aims on the part of the students - an apparent satisfaction with minimal content and an avoidance of the grey areas of modified statements; the chicken-egg relationship of these factors with purely linguistic handicaps, however, remains.

RESPONSES OF OVERSEAS STUDENTS TO DIFFERING TEACHING STYLES

Angela Brew, University of Essex

Introduction

The research on which this paper is based is a recently completed Social Science Research Council funded evaluation of the use of an Open University course by the Department of Electrical Engineering Science at the University of Essex. The course being used was the second level half-credit course 'The Digital Computer' (The Open University, 1975). At the University of Essex, it was used as an integral part of the second year degree programme. The evaluation covers the first two years the course was used and was concerned with all aspects relating to this: the reactions of students, the attitudes of staff and the organizational implications (Brew, 1978). The conventional course in the department of Electrical Engineering Science at the University of Essex took the form of lectures where usually the framework of a subject was presented. Generally no guidance was given on how to study and there was a negligible amount of individual attention given to students. In the main, the courses allowed the student flexibility to study as he wished - for example, a failure to work consistently throughout the course could, by and large, be made up by hard work before the examinations. The Open University course was, by contrast, a book-based course designed for independent study. The course material was spelled out with full supporting explanation and attempts were made to provide guidance on how to study. As the course was originally conceived, individual attention was provided through assignments. The course relied on steady self-discipline throughout the year - there was simply 'too much' to be made up during the examination revision period (see Brew, McCormick and Zorkoczy (1978) for a fuller account of how the course was used).

One of the basic assumptions of the evaluation was that the way individuals respond to an educational programme is, among other things, influenced by the educational, cultural, social and employment milieux which they have experienced in the past. However, the students we studied were extremely diverse in terms of their cultural and educational background and previous experiences and measuring these was not straightforward. In view of the growing use of Open University courses overseas, we felt it was important, as far as nationality was concerned, to separate out linguistic and cultural factors. The measures we took of students reflect this concern.

In 1976 we measured nationality according to whether students originated from Britain or from overseas and recorded whether the school and Further Education they had received was in Britain or abroad (the latter provided a guide to the length of time spent in this country). Later we tried to reflect the extent to which a student was linguistically foreign by recording the status of the English language in his country of origin (see Table 1). This information had, for practical reasons, to be collected from student files after they had completed the second year course. In the following academic year, we questioned students directly and were thus able to differentiate the language aspects more clearly. In 1976-77 the measures of nationality were: country of origin, stated nationality, whether a student was resident in Britain and for how long he had been, the status of English in country of origin, qualifications in English language and performance on an English test. The nationality of 1976-77 students, together with the status of English in their country of origin, is summarized in Table 2.

	No.	%
British nationality, from a country where English is the official/-first language. School in Britain and experience of British Further Education.	28	29.5
British nationality, from a country where English is the official/-first language. School in Britain.	14	14.7
British nationality, from a country where English is the official/-first language. School abroad.	7	7.4
Foreign nationality, from a country where English is an official or secondary school language. School and Further Education in Britain.	4	4.2
Foreign nationality, from a country where English is a foreign language. School and Further Education in Britain.	10	10.5
Foreign nationality, from a country where English is an official or secondary school language. Foreign school but came to Britain for Further Education.	10	10.5
Foreign nationality, from a country where English is an official or secondary school language. Foreign school and Further Education abroad.	7	7.4
British nationality, from a country where English is a foreign language. School abroad.	2	2.1
Foreign nationality, from a country where English is a foreign language. School and Further Education abroad.	5	5.3
Foreign nationality, from a country where English is a foreign language. School abroad.	4	4.2
Not known.	4	4.2
TOTAL ALL STUDENTS	95	100

TABLE 1 **Degrees of foreign-ness of 1975-76 students**

	Nationality	No.	%
English is the first language	British	39	41.0
	British but from abroad (eg West Indian)	1	1.1
	Other (eg American, South African, Guyanese)	3	3.2
English is an official language and secondary education takes place in it	British (Hong Kong)	6	6.3
	Singaporean	14	14.7
	Other (eg Mauritian, Rhodesian)	3	3.2
English is not an official language but some secondary education takes place in it	Malayan	9	9.5
	Venezuelan	7	7.3
English is a foreign language	Iranian	10	10.5
No information		3	3.2
TOTAL ALL STUDENTS		95	100

TABLE 2 **Nationality of 1976-77 students**

The English test we used was a British Council test entitled 'English for Science Study' which was at the time being developed by Andrew Harrison at the English Language Testing Service, Test Development Research Unit, Cambridge. Fifty-six students completed the test, fifteen of them British. The test provided interesting supplementary information, but in the main was not sufficiently discriminatory to highlight individual differences between students, particularly at the higher levels. Moreover, it contained no oral component so students who were virtually unintelligible to native speakers of English could perform well in it. In addition, we felt it was not clear to what extent it depended on cultural knowledge (something we were trying to separate out). For these reasons, we did not use it in our analyses.

Student Attitudes and Performance

Although students found the content of the Open University course interesting, its reading requirements presented difficulties and they tended to comment that it was too time-consuming. Indeed, in 1975-76 the majority said they preferred learning from lectures to learning from texts. Statistical analysis showed that these attitudes were unrelated to nationality. Interestingly, however, dissatisfaction with the method of studying the Open University course was disproportionate to its effect on performance. Not liking the method of the course was only likely to lead to failure if it was combined with other characteristics having a negative effect.

There was, as one would expect, wide variability in the lengths of time students spent studying. Again this was largely unrelated to nationality. (The exceptions to this were the Singaporeans in 1976-77, who tended to spend an average of ten hours more per week in total than British students). Although students in general spent a disproportionate amount of time on the Open University course *vis a vis* their other courses, national differences here were not discernible. Multivariate analyses suggested that sensible pacing throughout the Open University course was significantly related to success. However, again we did not detect any national differences in the work patterns of students.

There were, however, during both of the years we studied, significant differences in the performance of British and foreign students (signif. = 0.01). Mean scores of 1975-76 students on the Open University course are given in Table 3 (the two halves of the Open University course were assessed separately).

	British	Foreign	Unknown
Units 1 – 8 Open University Course	50.33	40.35	63.00
Units 9 – 16 Open University Course	45.83	36.05	56.00
Number of students	52	40	2

TABLE 3 Mean scores of British and foreign students on the Open University course (1975-76) (sig. = 0.01)

The importance of these differences is emphasized by the recognition that performance measures on some of the other courses did not follow the same pattern. By means of factor analysis of examination scores in both years, we were able to separate courses into two distinct groups: one group was characterized by courses based on mathematical representation and analysis, the other contained more descriptive, discursive courses, including the two halves of the Open University course. In the case of mathematically based courses, foreign students tended to score significantly better than British ones, while the trends for the Open University course also held for other courses which were predominantly descriptive, for example Business Management and Instrumentation. Table 4 gives the mean examination scores of students on selected courses according to nationality.

COURSE	YEAR 1					
	British	Foreign	Variance	British	Foreign	Variance
Mathematics	40.27	48.36	F - 2.93 Sig- 05	44.39	46.90	F - 2.26 Sig- .025
Applied Electromagnetics	33.42	51.05	F - 17.82 Sig- 001	41.58	44.28	F - 1.89 Sig- .05
Semiconductors and Semiconductor Devices	34.58	42.36	F - 4.42 Sig- .05	47.00	51.27	F - 2.42 Sig- .01
Business Management	44.78	32.65	F - 5.34 Sig- .01	56.92	43.76	F - 2.99 Sig- .01
Instrumentation	43.00	24.92	F - 25.95 Sig- 001	45.92	31.9	F - 4.31 Sig- .001

TABLE 4 Mean examination scores on selected second year courses

Consideration of students' career patterns suggested that these too were of importance in relation to performance, particularly when related to nationality. In the first year, we identified a group of particularly weak students who were from overseas but who, prior to going to Essex, had had experience of Further Education in this country. This group tended to perform badly on all courses. Similarly, in the second year, entering Essex after being a full-time student in a College of Further Education appears to have placed students at a disadvantage in terms of their performance, again on all courses.

Adjusting to the New Learning Environment

Examining students' performance on different kinds of courses indicates, then, the importance of linguistic factors to success on descriptive ones. Finding it difficult to adjust to a new method of learning was not confined to overseas students and consequently many of the implications of this study for the teaching of study methods are of relevance to both British and overseas students. Nevertheless, there are a number of points relating to cultural factors which affect the extent to which overseas students make the best use of the resources for learning available to them, which are worth considering.

Firstly, we found that some students had only just arrived in this country and needed time to find their feet in a new culture. The extent of 'culture shock' is illustrated by this student:

> 'Before I came I did make a study of the UK. I knew exactly where I was going to land and where I was supposed to go before I came to Essex

> University, and the only disadvantage was I didn't know anybody here before I came - in fact somebody told me you shouldn't know all these things, you should go out there and experiment yourself - try and get a shock. When I came here it wasn't too bad because there's a lot of us together, and we did manage ourselves for the first week. It's a bit hectic . . . It took me a month really to settle down before I really understood what the lecture is about, because it's a totally new country, new environment, you really have to take a bit of time to settle down. And then of course food is a bit of a problem in the beginning.'

Conversations with staff suggested lack of awareness that some students had only just arrived and as far as it was possible to judge, no concessions were made by them in early lectures to help students to make this initial readjustment. I mentioned earlier the importance of sensible pacing throughout the Open University course. The time taken to settle down presented difficulties for the student newly arrived from overseas.

The second point I want to mention here relates to the attitudes of specific national groups of students to people in authority. For example, we noted among one group a reluctance to give information about how they were coping with their work, their attitudes to courses, etc., for fear it would be fed back to their embassy. Some overseas students would not go to lecturers with questions for fear of being accused of bribing them to give higher marks. These attitudes clearly influenced the extent to which students were prepared to openly admit their difficulties and to actually seek help. Multi-variate analyses, however, showed that the existence of problems with study was countermand to success. The need for formal (and informal) mechanisms whereby staff can find out about such problems in the early stages of a course is clearly indicated. However, there are these cultural obstacles to be overcome.

Also important in this connection may be a student's self-knowledge of his English ability. I met students during my study who would not admit that English was a problem for them and they tended not to go to staff with the admission that language was causing problems. Instead, they tended to attribute difficulties for example in reading the Open University course, to the fact that it was too time-consuming or to their lack of background in the subject matter.

We also noted different cultural norms relating to the extent to which students discussed work and study amongst themselves. Some of the Chinese students, for example, had a habit of working with one other close friend and would, with them, attempt to make sense of course material in their own language. Other students never discussed work with fellow students at all. We found that students tended to remain in ethnic groups in lectures and between lectures they tended to disperse. This is how one student expressed his life-style:

> 'For me my life is quite simple. Every day just the morning go to a lecture and then go back and do the work, that's all. Nothing else. Sometimes see my friend to discuss problems or have a talk, that's all.'

Few overseas students asked questions in lectures. This was partly through lack of confidence in their ability to express themselves clearly in English, but of importance too was their uncertainty about cultural norms concerning which questions were appropriate to be asked. The system of education in this country is clearly very different from a [illegible] of overseas ones. Smaller classes and closer attention to teaching students in progressive stages (perhaps more like secondary school education in this country) was the experience from which many students had come. Moreover, the basic orientation to education may be different. Here is one student's view of the differences he had found:

> 'The education system here is different in approach. We (in Singapore) are more regimental - very examination orientated, and that's bad. I think what is being taught here is the correct attitude towards study. A kind of academic development. For us it's more goal-orientated - you're aiming for certain things and you're going to get it, even if you slog 16 hours a day. Back home the competition is fantastic . . . Here (the emphasis) is more on development of your thinking - concepts. I think it's the right approach to education, because when you go out, it's not how many marks you get, it's how well you can handle the situation, and if you've got a rotten way of thinking, a rotten attitude. . . Back home, they look first at your credentials and afterwards at how you work.'

Such attitudes as these relate to our multi-variate analyses which indicated that of importance to performance were students' conceptions of the nature of the way knowledge is or should be presented in courses and their views of what learning is (Brew and McCormick, 1979). This is discussed in the next section.

At the beginning of his course, then, the overseas student not only has to learn new material, he also has the job of coming to terms with new cultural expectations: with finding out what it **means** to be a student at a British university. In making sense of his new surroundings, the student will seek cues as to how he is to behave. He first meets some of the academic staff at the initial briefing meeting. Parlett (1977) suggests that from the 'tone, the display of priorities, the weight of emphasis' at this meeting, students will draw influences about how a department operates. At Essex, we noted among staff a selfconscious attempt to appear friendly while the underlying message was one of discipline and control. The most prominent topic mentioned at the initial meeting was assessment (particularly examinations). It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that non-verbal cues of a friendly nature would have been over-shadowed by the stern verbal tone and emphasis.

Thus the overseas student enters a British university not only possibly linguistically but certainly culturally disadvantaged. In the next section, implications for the teaching of study methods are discussed.

Implications for the Teaching of Study Methods to Overseas Students

This evaluation study points to some problems students have in adjusting to a new style of course presentation which, as mentioned earlier, are not confined to any one group of students. It also indicates some of the particular problems of adjustment of overseas students. In this final section, I want to highlight some of the issues which relate to the teaching of study methods. My basic assumption about such sessions is that they should provide an opportunity for students to examine their own responses to the learning environment, to increase their awareness of the factors affecting their study and to discuss and explore alternative approaches to the learning process. I take the view that prescriptive advice to students on study methods is inappropriate because the essential requirement for improvement is that the student make sense of the learning process for himself (Gibbs and Northedge, 1976). Accordingly, my intention here is to heighten awareness of the issues, not to prescribe specific remedies.

We identified among the students we were studying two qualitatively different ways of viewing material presented in courses. One way was to view a lecture as the whole subject which had to be learned for the examination. The other was to view the material presented in the lecture as a framework of main ideas on which to base further thinking and reading (Brew and McCormick, 1979). In addition, two contrasting views of learning were identified: the first was to see learning as the accumulation of sets of facts, or 'information'; the second was to view it as the relating of ideas. Which of these views is appropriate to a particular learning situation depends among other things on the assumptions built into the learning task. The Open University course, for example, presented a view of learning as involving the relating of ideas and the precise way in which these ideas were to be related was spelled out. It thus presented problems both to students who saw course material as a framework (it presented explanation as well as framework and distinguishing between these was not straightforward), and to those who saw it as the 'whole' subject (there was simply too much to be learned for the examination). For those who viewed learning as accumulating facts it again contained too many facts, and for those seeking relationships it caused problems by spelling out specific ones rather than letting students develop their own.

These qualitatively different ways in which students conceptualise the learning process do not, as such, appear to be distinctive of particular national groups. Nonetheless, it does seem reasonable to suppose that different kinds of educational experience will tend to perpetuate different views of learning and knowledge. For example, an educational system grounded on encouraging students to expand their thinking is likely to present a different view of knowledge from that presented in a system geared to the passing of examinations. Despite inconclusive evidence concerning the effects of differing cultural influences, this study does point to the importance of examining the implicit assumptions about knowledge and learning held within an institution, by the course, the course teacher and by the learner, and it suggests that fundamental to the way a student attempts to study are the assumptions he makes about the learning process which may or may not be appropriate in a particular situation.

Related to these issues are the difficulties students experienced with learning from reading (this is not, of course, confined to self-study courses). The problem manifests itself in difficulties with sorting out the main points of a text from supporting explanation (seeing the wood for the trees) and is related to the fact that many students lacked criteria for deciding what was important to learn and also for deciding when their study of a text had been adequate. These problems are also manifested in uncertainty about what to take notes on and affect essay and report writing. Our study suggested, however, that these problems were also related to students' views about the nature of knowledge and learning and suggested that attempts to improve students' reading, note-taking, etc. could only be really effective if conducted within the context of an examination by students of their basic attitudes to what they are trying to do when learning.

The application of these matters in study methods sessions is difficult because not only are the issues extremely complex, but students differ in the extent to which learning has become an object of reflection for them (Saljo, 1979). To pose a question such as 'what do you think learning is?' for example may be to present many students with an unintelligible question. It would, therefore, be necessary to begin at a more basic level, and to encourage the student to think about what he is trying to do when he is learning. This paper stresses the need to create for overseas students opportunities for them to discuss issues relating to differences in views of learning so that they can discuss and explore for themselves these differences in a non-threatening atmosphere.

Earlier some problems of cultural adjustment were mentioned. These suggest that articulating and discussing cultural norms pervading lectures and classrooms is desirable, including such things as how you tell when it is appropriate to ask or answer a question in a lecture, what kind of question it is appropriate to ask, how the lecture is designed to fit into the rest of the work for the course, also such things as how to use the library and when it is appropriate to go to staff with problems, what to do if they are unavailable, etc., etc. Again, creating an atmosphere of dialogue where students can be helped to articulate and explore for themselves their attempts to make sense of the learning environment is important.

Also of importance to how students learn are the discussions they have with their fellow students, and we have suggested some students are inhibited in this. Thus they may need to be taught how to learn through discussion and to explore for themselves their own inhibitions relating to discussing problems and course issues with their fellow students.

Earlier I mentioned that students' attitudes to authority influence the extent to which they seek help from teaching staff. Of interest too is the question of the authority of the teacher in relation to the knowledge presented in courses. Perry's (1970) concept of relativism is relevant in this connection. Perry suggests that students develop through a series of stages from a dualist position where everything is seen in terms of black and white, right and wrong and where authority goes unquestioned, to positions of relativism where there is a weighing and judging of evidence. Whether or not these 'stages' are indeed a product of intellectual development is still an open question. What is clear is that past experiences do have an influence on the ways in which students respond to course materials as authoritative. The Open University course we were considering, for example, presents, within it, conflicting views. One overseas student noticed and was disoriented by this, but others could scarcely conceive of it being so. Courses which present opposing points of view, or where the teacher demands a questioning approach from his students, may present difficulties for the student from an educational system where the authority of the teacher and of established knowledge goes unquestioned.

The students we were studying were students of Electronics and many of them were unused to learning from reading. They tended, as I have said, to experience difficulties with the reading associated with the Open University course. These difficulties were shared by British and foreign students alike. However, since foreign students' performance on the descriptive courses suffered, it is pertinent to explore the implications of this finding for other disciplines. That foreign students were not disadvantaged on mathematically oriented courses suggests that performance on technical subjects where there is a substantial mathematical component is not greatly affected by language ability (the implications of this for courses designed to teach specialist technical language to engineers and scientists are worth considering). However, as performance on other descriptive courses ran similar to the Open University course, it would seem reasonable to suppose that language problems are likely to have a marked effect on performance on courses in other faculties where there is a substantial descriptive component, eg Arts and Social Sciences.

Conclusion

In this paper I have outlined the responses of overseas students to different teaching styles and to the learning environment in which they find themselves. In discussing the implications of these responses for the teaching of study methods, I have taken the view that prescriptions to students about how they should study are out of place. I have stressed that what is required are opportunities for students to develop their own awareness of the factors affecting their study (Gibbs, 1976), to explore their responses and their difficulties for themselves, to become aware of the issues affecting them and to examine, with friendly staff, ways in which these can be overcome.

References

BREW, A (1978)
Developing a Methodology for an Evaluation, *Assessment in Higher Education*, Vol. 3, No. 3, June 1978, pp.168 - 185.

BREW, A and McCORMICK, R (1979)
Student Learning and an Independent Study Course, *Higher Education*, 8, 4.

BREW, A, McCORMICK, R and ZORKOCZY, P (1978)
The Use of an Open University Course in a British University. Report to the Social Science Research Council (July).

GIBBS, G and NORTHEDGE, A (1976)
Developing Study Skills - A Student Centred Approach. Open University unpublished paper for the Tuition and Counselling Research Group. February 1976.

PARLETT, M (1977)
The Department as a Learning Milieu, *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 2, No. 2.

SALJO, R (1978)
Learning about Learning, *Higher Education*, 8, 4.

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY (1975)
TM221, *The Digital Computer.* Milton Keynes, The Open University Press.

PERRY, W (1970)
Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development: A Scheme. New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

SURVEY OF UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER OVERSEAS POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS' INITIAL LEVEL OF COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH & THEIR SUBSEQUENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: CALENDAR YEAR 1977

Kenneth James,University of Manchester

Scope of the survey

1 Approximately 180 new English-as-a-Foreign-Language (Post-Graduate)[1] Overseas Students (EFLOS) registered during the calendar year 1977.

2 150[2] or **83%[3] of these students were tested** by the Tutors to Overseas Students on, or within a few weeks of, their arrival.

3 Of the questionnaires sent out to the tutors for these 150 students, 140 ie 93% were returned.

4 Thus the information in this survey relates to 140 out of an intake of 180, ie **77% of EFLOS for 1977.**

Aim of the survey

1 A copy of the questionnaire which was sent out to the subject tutors may be found at the end of this report (Appendix 1).

2 The questions were intended to reveal

what academic progress had been made by the student;

what reasons (academic, linguistic or others) there might be for excessive difficulty or failure;

how far the student's English was adequate for the purposes of his study.

A special question was also devised to encourage any other comments the tutor might wish to make concerning a student's English.

Academic performance of the 1977 new EFLOS in relation to their adequacy in English

1 **27%** of the students for whom we obtained returns (ie 38 out of 140) had **serious** or **very serious** difficulty with their academic work.

2 This 27% consists of

a small minority of students, 4% (only 6 in number) who failed or withdrew even though their English was judged both by the subject tutor and the

Tutors to Overseas Students to be adequate for academic purposes. Poor examination technique, examination nerves, lack of ability or lack of basis in the subject discipline were among the reasons given;

23% (32 in number) who had serious or very serious difficulties in their academic work either in whole or in part because of English language problems.

3 Limitations in English, therefore, outnumber limitations in subject knowledge or ability, as reasons given for these students finding their academic work difficult or impossible to complete, in the ratio of rather more than 5 - 1.

4 The 23% (32 students) who experienced serious/very serious difficulties, either in whole or in part because of English language problems, comprises.

12% (17 students) who experienced **very serious difficulties** due to inadequate English;

7% (10 students) who experienced **serious difficulties** in their work due to limited English but who seem to have coped or to be coping;

4% (5 students) who experienced difficulties (some serious, others very serious) in their work because of a combination of inadequate English and limited subject matter ability.

5 Information from the subject tutors indicates that approximately 12% of the new 1977 EFLOS falling within the scope of this survey have failed, or may be expected to fail, the course of study for which they initially registered, either in whole or in part due to weakness in their English.

Predictions by the Tutors to Overseas Students as to the adequacy of the 1977 new EFLOS' English for their academic work

1 The Tutors to Overseas students grade the English of each student, on arrival, in terms of its adequacy for purposes of post-graduate study. The following five point scale on the Chaplen Speeded Grammar and Vocabulary Tests (1970) is employed:

0% - 29%	negligible
30% - 40%	inadequate
41% - 55%	barely adequate
56% - 69%	adequate
70% - 100%	good

2 Information from the completed questionnaires would, it was hoped, indicate how accurate a predictor this 40% cut-off point had proved to be.

3 34 students, or 24% of the students surveyed, fell into the negligible inadequate categories as regards their English. Of these

15.5% (22 students) did in fact experience serious or very serious difficulties with their studies because of language difficulties;

8.5% (12 students) experienced few difficulties.

4 Thus, almost 2 out of 3 students who scored 40% or below did, in fact, prove to have negligible or inadequate English for their academic work. This replicates almost exactly a similar study carried out previously by my colleague, Bob Jordan, (1976).

5 The group of 12 students (8.5%) who did **not** experience language difficulties displayed the following characteristics:

nearly half attended the Pre-Session Intensive English Course and so were able to make significant improvements before starting their academic work;

two thirds were helped to improve by attendance in term-time classes;

two thirds were engaged on work which might be classified as minimally language dependent (eg involving experimental work in a laboratory situation).

6 **76%** ie 106 out of the 140 students surveyed, scored more than 40% on the Chaplen Tests. Of this group,

69% proved to have had no serious difficulty as regards language in their subsequent academic work;

7% (10 students in all) had serious difficulties in this respect.

7 An analysis of this group of 7% (the 10 students noted above, in 4.6) shows that

half of them were also judged to have difficulties in the purely subject discipline area;

nearly all of them (8 out 10) fell into the category of 'barely adequate' on their initial English test;

a substantial majority, ie 7 out of the 10 students, were doing work which was heavily language dependent (eg English Literature, Philosophy, Administration, etc.).

8 To summarize then: on the evidence presented here, the tests have proved to be good predictors of a student's English Language performance in his academic work, in that

> 2 out of 3 students whom the Tutors to Overseas Students expected to have serious language problems, did in fact have such difficulties:
>
> almost 9 out of 10 students whom the Tutors to Overseas Students expected to have no serious language problems, did not seem in fact to experience any serious difficulty in their work in this respect.

9 In reality, prediction of a student's language performance is even more accurate than that described in 8 above, for the Tutors do not in fact stick as rigidly to the Test Score indicators as has been described in Section 4 of this paper.

10 In particular, reports to Departments on a student's likely performance take into account the nature of the work he will be involved in. Thus when reporting on a student whose work makes minimal demands as regards English (eg experimental work in a laboratory, the write-up of which will replicate other pieces of research), the Tutor to Overseas Students does not necessarily say that a score of, for example, 35% will prove inadequate. Conversely, a report on a Sociology student will emphasize that while a score of 60% is 'normally' considered to be 'adequate', the student may well experience difficulties as regards both reading comprehension and writing, as this particular subject requires a standard of English which approximates more closely to that of a post-graduate native speaker.

Discussion of the results

1 The fact that the Chaplen Test proved such a good predictor must throw doubt on the need to introduce tests which specifically attempt to assess communicative competence. Apart from the fact that no-one has yet adequately specified what communicative competence is, any such 'Communicative' test would seem to present much greater difficulty as regards construction, and would take considerably longer to administer.

2 It may puzzle some to note that a somewhat old-fashioned structure-based test should be such a good predictor of how satisfactorily the students have been able to communicate their meaning in their academic work. It would seem perfectly proper with such a result to speculate along the following lines:

> a An 'adequate' control of the language system may significantly correlate with communicative competence.

b An adequate control of the language system, if it does not correlate in this way, may give the student the necessary means speedily to acquire such a communicative competence when starting academic work in the medium of English.

c Communicative competence may not be significantly dependent on control of the language system but may be relatively easily and quickly acquired by highly motivated students working in a medium situation..

3 A worrying feature of any enquiry such as the present one is the factor of subject tutor tolerance. There may be a tendency for some tutors to bend over backwards in making allowances for a linguistic handicap in taught courses. While, on occasions, it may be safe to do this in subjects which are basically numerate or experimental, it can be very dangerous indeed in other subjects. Giving the benefit of the doubt may well mean ascribing accuracy and insight where none exist.

4 Tutor tolerance may reluctantly (though understandably) have to be withdrawn when overseas students from a particular subject area wish to practise their professional skills **in Britain** (where English, of course has to be employed) rather than in their own country (where English may be used only on occasions, or not at all). Thus the medical profession, which at one time had a highly tolerant attitude as regards language competence, now employs the TRAB* test in an attempt to ensure adequate standards in oral and written English for students who wish to practise medicine here.

5 Another difficulty that subject tutors face in assessing their postgraduate students is that of plagiarism. While this applies to both overseas and native UK students, there are likely to be peculiar temptations and pressures for EFLOS from certain cultural backgrounds. Many come from a society where the text-book is sacred and the text something to be learned and reproduced. They can see no harm and indeed much virtue in using the exact words of the author, particularly when their own English is limited. Any constraint on large scale quoting may seem perverse and unjust. It would not be surprising if attempts at plagiarism are made therefore. In the nature of things one only hears of cases which have been detected.

6 Perhaps a more serious problem in conducting a survey of this kind at post-graduate level is the employment of ghost-writers. Clearly the facts are difficult to arrive at here, though I have some evidence from students that it occurs much more widely than one might suspect. Of course at this level the student must basically be able to communicate his results and/or his ideas otherwise there will be nothing there to ghost. The problem may be most acute where a tutor is so generous with his supervision and

---

* now known as PLAB

so sympathetic to a student's language difficulties that the student becomes a research assistant rather than the 'onlie begetter' of the work that is ultimately submitted.

Conclusion

While 3 to 6 should prompt us to be cautious in interpreting these results, there does seem grounds for modest satisfaction in the adequacy of the testing arrangements for the overseas students who are starting on a post graduate course in the medium of English for the first time. It is also encouraging that while 24% of the students surveyed on arrival fell into the negligible/inadequate categories as regards their English, only 12% failed (or may be expected to fail) the course of study for which they initially registered, either in whole or in part due to weakness in their English. In a perfect world the 24% would have been excluded entry, of course. However, personal observations over a period of years prompts the following comment: it would seem that many departments, and certainly all the students, prefer the University to take the risk of accepting someone who may fail rather than the risk of refusing someone who may succeed. Perhaps, put in this context, the results obtained are not unimpressive.

Notes

1 A small number (7) of **under**-graduate students are included in the Survey. These students presumably did not matriculate in the normal way and were sent to the Overseas Students' Unit to be tested along with their post-graduate colleagues. For the purpose of this survey they will be treated as post-graduate students, as their problems as regards English were no different from those of this group.

2 The remaining 30 students, 17% of the total intake, who were **not** tested, will certainly have had few or no difficulties with their English. If they had done so they would certainly have found their way to the Unit in order to receive help.

3 Except for those calculations which give answers of exactly 0.5, all percentages are given to the nearest whole number.

4 Students described as having had **'very serious difficulty'** are those who failed part or the whole of their course or who had to

- a delay full and final registration for a course or programme of research.
- b significantly prolong the time spent in completing their work,
- c re-register for a less exacting course or qualification,

because of problems in their subject ascribed by the tutor to limited English or inadequate academic ability. A few others have been placed in this category whose English according to the subject tutor caused serious misunderstandings and/or whose weakness in English was specifically discounted or made allowance for when assessing their work.

Other students whose limited English has hampered their progress, but who have coped or seem likely to be able to cope are described as having had **'serious difficulty'.**

5 Not all the students in this survey have completed their research.

6 It is very likely that if information had been obtained for **all** 1977 EFLOS (instead of the 77%, as noted in 1), the 12% quoted here would have fallen **below 10%.** In other words, 12% is likely to represent the **absolute maximum** of those who failed or will fail the course study for which they initially registered.

7 Chaplen, F. (1970) The Identification of Non-Native Speakers of English likely to under-achieve in University Courses through inadequate command of the language. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Manchester.

Chaplen produced a Speeded Grammar and a Speeded Vocabulary test. Both are gap filling tests at the one or two sentence level. The Grammar Test takes 10 minutes to complete and consists of 50 questions, 3 items for each question. The Vocabulary Test takes 18 minutes to complete and also consists of 50 questions, but in this case there are 5 items for each question.

Appendix 1

OVERSEAS POSTGRADUATES: TEST IN ENGLISH: FOLLOW-UP

1 Name: ....

2 Department: ....

3 Course: ....

4 Qualification **originally** registered for: ....

5 Number of years **originally** proposed: ....

6 Has there been any amendment to items 3, 4 or 5? Yes/No................

7 If 'Yes' to No 6 please state briefly the reason ....

....

....

8 Has the student **failed** any exams., courses, etc., since starting? Yes/No...........................

9 If 'Yes' to No 8 please give what you consider to be the probable reason(s):

....

....

....

10 How would you assess the student's English as regards:

	Good	Adequate	Barely Adequate	Inadequate	Negligible
Lectures					
Seminars					
Writing (report, essays, dissertations, etc.)					
Everyday communication (eg making arrangement discussing timetables)					

Please tick the appropriate box.

11 Any other comments regarding the student's English that you would care to make?

....

....

....

Signed: .... Date: ....

CODE FEATURES OF EXAMINATION SCRIPTS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN NATIVE SPEAKER AND NON-NATIVE SPEAKER ANSWERS.

Gerard M Greenall,University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne

The analysis presented in this paper is part of a larger research project into written work, both of the examination and the non-examination type, produced by non-native speakers as part of their university course requirements. The sample on which the present analysis was based is a small part of the data which we have to date, and was chosen as lending itself particularly well to an initial comparative analysis. The sample involved is small, and so the outcome of what I am going to present must at best be a set of hypotheses as a basis for any future analysis.

The background to the sample is 6 examination questions set over the last four years in the final examination of the MSc course in Clinical Biochemistry at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The sample comprises 15 examinations answers: for each question a good native speaker answer and a failed non-native speaker answer, and, in addition, for three of the questions a pass non-native speaker answer. Each of the 15 answers was written by a different student; the sample therefore contains writing from 15 different individuals. The following scheme shows how the sample was made up and is the basis for most of the tables which follow.

Questions	Answers
1	N OP OF
2	N OP OF
3	N OF
4	N OF
5	N OP
6	N OP OF

KEY:

N = good native speaker answer (NATIVE)

OP = non-native pass answer (OVERSEAS PASS)

OF = non-native fail answer (OVERSEAS FAIL)

The relevant examination question papers had three sections comprising three questions each: students were required to answer four questions in all, at least one from each section. The six questions were:

1 Discuss porphyrin biosynthesis with special reference to haem.
(1976 Ques.A2)

2 What are the possible causes of a raised serum calcium concentration?
(1978 Ques.B6)

3 Discuss the relative merits of methods available for the routine estimating of blood glucose.
(1977 Ques.C8)

4 What is meant by the term 'monoclonal gemmopathy'? Discuss its laboratory investigation.
(1976 Ques.B6)

5 Give an account of the functions of plasma proteins.
(1977 Ques.A1)

6 Discuss the molecular structure of haemoglobin and its relationship to the haemoglobinopathies.
(1975 Ques.A2)

All answer scripts were subjected to four levels of analysis, which were:

1 Length and segmentation

2 Grammatical errors

3 Syntactic features: actual and attempted

4 Types of statements

Level 1: Length and Segmentation

This was simply a count, in numbers of words, of the lengths of the answers and segments of answers. The totals are given in the following table.

TABLE 1 Length and Segmentation

		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
		Total number of words	Words in text	% text	Parags/ 100	Parags/ length in no. words	Sent/ 100	Sent/ length in no. words	Subtitles/ 100
1	N	500	330	66%	3.64	28	7.3	14	2.1
	OP	390	232	59%	0.86	116	7.7	13	0
	OF	358	120	33%	0	-	7.5	13	0
2	N	768	740	96%	1.75	57	5.9	17	0
	OP	586	504	86%	4.16	24	5.3	19	1.7
	OF	652	646	99%	1.54	65	6.8	15	0.4
3	N	974	920	94%	2.28	46	4.7	21	0.2
	OF	399	367	91%	2.72	37	4.6	21	1
4	N	987	966	97%	1.55	64	5.9	17	0
	OF	417	359	86%	3.34	30	4.4	22	1.6
5	N	759	620	81%	2.50	39	4.5	22	0.8
	OP	409	253	61%	0	0	5.5	18	7.9
6	N	787	762	96%	1.96	51	6	17	0
	OP	619	564	91%	3.01	33	6.6	0	
	OF	301	289	96%	2.40	41	5.5	18	0

Commentary

There is a very obvious difference in total length between native and non-native answers, which suggests that deficient content played a major role in the failure of the **OF** students and the poor performance of the **OP** students. Column (b) gives the number of words in sentences in discursive text, as distinct from words used in diagram labelling, headings, tables. etc., and column (c) the proportion of words in discursive text to the total number of words. This proportion, predictably enough, appears to vary according to the question set: questions 1 and 5 have a smaller proportion than the rest.

Columns (d) and (e) indicate the number of (orthographic) paragraphs which occur for every hundred words of text and the average lengths of paragraphs respectively. Paragraph length varied considerably, even between the native speakers, and appears to have been purely a feature of personal style. All paragraphs in the sample (except 1 OP and 1 OF, where paragraphs were not, or virtually not, used) were on the short side.

Columns (f) and (g) indicate the average number of sentences per 100 words and the average lengths of sentences. The average length was 17-18 words with no major difference between native and non-native speakers.

The final column indicates the extent to which subtitles were used. There is no obvious patterning here and their use appears to be a matter of personal preference.

Level 2 Grammatical Errors

This level of analysis comprised largely a count of grammatical errors: the vast majority of these errors were correctable, and, when corrected, made the scripts pieces of acceptable English, at least at the sentence level. The errors are divided into 9 broad categories, as shown in the table. The figures given were calculated in terms of the average number of a particular type of error per 100 words: assuming, therefore, that the students continue to make errors at the same rate in one or more examination answers making up 1000 words in length, the figures represent the number of times they would make a particular type of error. The reason for this method of presentation is to avoid disconcerting decimal values and thus to aid visualisation of the various comparisons made.

TABLE 2 Grammatical Errors per 1000 Words

		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
		inflection	article	spelling	clause structure	word order	vocabulary	incomprehensible	errors/100
1	N	0	0	6	12	0	0	0	1.8
	OP	13	9	13	9	0	0	0	4.3
	OF	25	8	8	8	0	0	0	5
2	N	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	OP	63	22	20	6	0	8	0	11.9
	OF	40	5	26	9	2	9	0	9.1
3	N	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	OF	41	5	11	5	0	14	3	7.9
4	N	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0.4
	OF	39	14	33	3	3	3	3	9.7
5	N	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	OF	47	12	12	8	0	16	0	9.5
6	N	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	OP	37	30	7	0	4	9	2	8.9
	OF	38	41	21	7	0	3	3	11.4
average no. of errors (OP & OF only)		38	16	17	6	1	7	1	

Commentary

The figures in the bottom row indicates the average number of errors per 1000 words for the **non-native speakers** only. Inflection errors here include verb endings, plurals and also omission or incorrect use of the verb 'to be' as an auxiliary. There was an unusually high number of clause structure deviations in the case of one native speaker (1N): the deviations from normal written English clause structure appeared to be the outcome of an occasional 'telegraphic' style, and therefore of a different order than the non-native speaker deviations. Errors which were uncorrectable, and therefore rendered a sentence or part of a sentence incomprehensible (column g), were very few and far between. This indicates that errors of this type do not constitute a real hindrance to communication (unless examiners are on average much worse at compensating for grammatical error than I am), and at worst constitutes an irritating 'noise' factor.

TABLE 3 **Handwriting and Punctuation Errors per 1000 Words**

		a	b
		Handwriting	Punctuation
1	N	0	15
	OP	21	0
	OF	8	25
2	N	0	0
	OP	4	8
	OF	0	23
3	N	3	3
	OF	0	3
4	OF	3	0
	OF	0	14
5	N	6	14
	OF	20	24
6	N	1	14
	OP	0	21
	OF	0	7

Commentary

Column A Handwriting was measured crudely by the number of words illegible to me. Most of the illegible items were technical lexis, and presumably rather more legible to the subject specialist. There was little legibility problem in most cases: however, in all cases, the native speaker handwriting was, to me, aesthetically more acceptable.

Column B Native speakers were by no means free from punctuation errors, but, as might be expected, there was a greater tendency towards this type of error in the non-native speakers.

Level 3 Syntactic Features

This was a count of various grammatical structures and language features which appeared in the scripts, and was carried out **after** correction of errors featuring at Level 2, ie on text which was almost perfectly acceptable from a grammatical point of view.

TABLE 4 Occurence of Actual and Intended Syntactic Features per 1000 Words

		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
		Sentences	Finite Clauses	Sub. Clauses	Passives	Relative Clauses	Reduced relatives	Modals	Nouns as pre-modifiers	Linkers
1	N	73	100	21	54	16	10	9	75	12
	OP	77	125	26	12	10	0	0	73	0
	OF	75	108	33	16	8	0	0	25	0
2	N	59	83	19	32	7	1	26	66	0
	OF	53	103	24	8	14	6	4	18	4
	OF	68	102	22	15	3	0	3	14	3
3	N	47	82	17	32	22	11	24	38	10
	OF	46	101	30	22	22	5	19	22	5
4	N	59	102	21	46	14	7	13	22	3
	OF	44	100	11	19	5	0	11	25	0
5	N	45	77	6	32	18	10	2	53	0
	OF	55	91	27	32	11	0	0	47	0
6	N	60	110	20	41	14	1	17	46	3
	OP	66	102	11	25	9	0	11	25	0
	OF	55	90	0	10	3	3	3	73	0
Averages (N/O)		57/59	92/102	17/20	39/18	15/9	7/2	15/6	50/36	5/1

Commentary

While non-native speakers on average used a greater number of finite clauses in general and a greater number of subordinate clauses, there was a marked tendency for those constructions to the right of the heavy line to be used more often by native speakers. All are syntactically complex: it may additionally be of significance that most of these latter are devices employed in information theme structuring in English.

As part of the same level of analysis I looked in rather more detail at three grammatical features of a rather different order. The following counts were made.

- lengths (number of words) of nominal groups functioning in clause structure as subject, complement or elements of adjuncts.

- lengths (number of words) of verbal groups functioning as predicator.

- lengths of adverbials (including prepositional phrases) functioning as adjuncts in clause structure.

All terms used are as understood in systemic grammar[1].

Length was taken in all cases as a rough indicator of complexity. The following examples of nominal groups are taken from the sample.

expulsion of 3 molecules of ammonia (6 words)

the positioning of the groups found over the page (9 words)

a direct PTH bonding to the intestine (7 words)

the raised serum calcium concentration in these cases (8 words)

a direct consequence of the raised serum PTH (8 words)

direct spectophotometric measurement of the decrease of absorbance of Fe $(CN)^{3-}$ at 420 mm concentration (13 words)

Verbal groups vary in length from 1 (eg present simple forms) to 4 (eg **would have been** + past participle forms). The lengths of adverbial groups tend to vary according to the lengths of nominal groups rankshifted into them.

[1] Muir (1972); Scott et al. (1968)

TABLE 5 Occurrence and Length of Nominal, Verbal and Adverbial Groups

		a	b	c	d	e	f
		Nominal groups/1000	Nominal groups/length in no. words	Verbal groups/1000	Verbal groups/length in no. words	Adverbials /1000	Adverbials /length in no. words
1	N	188	2.5	100	1.7	78	1.9
	OP	267	2.8	125	1.2	56	3.6
	OF	233	2.9	108	1.1	8	1
2	N	157	4.1	84	1.8	35	4.2
	OP	182	3.5	103	1.3	51	4
	OF	215	2.5	102	1.3	80	3.5
3	N	169	3.5	81	1.8	76	4
	OF	174	2.8	101	1.4	49	3.3
4	N	172	3.1	102	1.5	60	3.2
	OF	231	2.4	100	1.4	52	3.1
5	N	211	3.4	79	1.4	82	3.9
	OF	205	3.3	91	1.3	87	4.7
6	N	202	3.2	110	1.5	56	4.2
	OP	236	2.8	109	1.2	41	2.8
	OF	225	3.0	93	1.1	41	3.7
Averages N/O		183/218	3.3/2.9	93/103	1.6/1.1	64/52	3.6/3.3

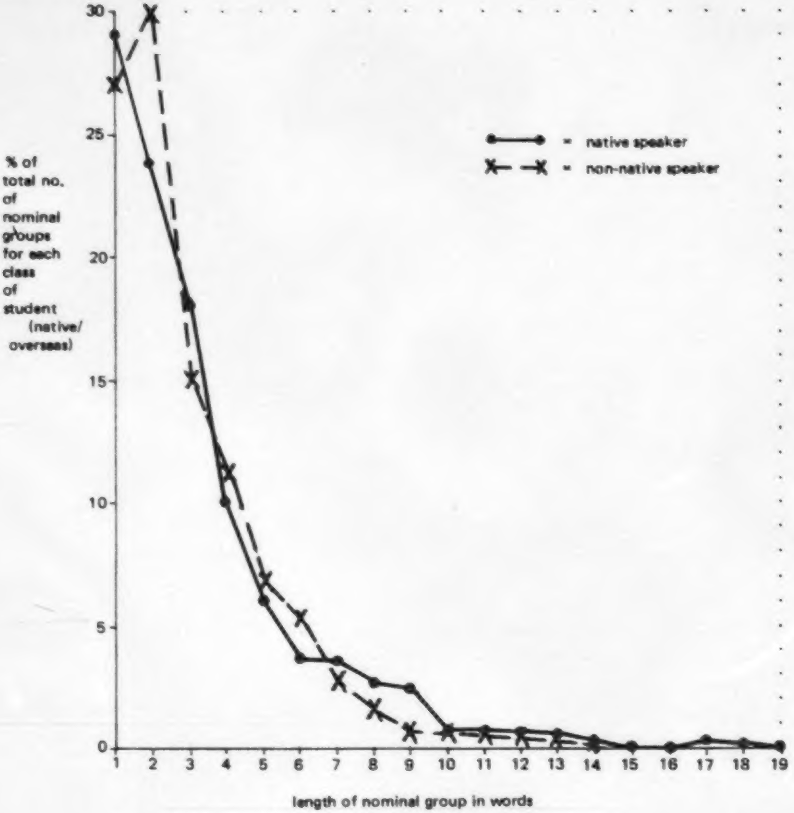
Commentary

In the case of all length values (columns b, d, f), even a small difference in the figures given is significant as the majority of both nominal and verbal groups tend to be short (usually one word in the case of verbal groups, 2 or 3 words in the case of nominal groups).

Nominal groups

There was a tendency for non-native speakers to use more nominal groups, while nominal groups in the case of native speakers tended to be longer. The following diagram shows the differences rather more clearly.

TABLE 6 Distribution of Nominal Groups of Various Lengths



(Note: Data for non-native speakers was here supplemented by data from the whole of the rest of the examination scripts in question, and results are therefore based on the total data available for these students.)

Whereas, for example, groups of two words form 30% of the total number of nominal groups used by non-native speakers, they constitute about 23.5% of the total for native speakers. At the other end of the scale, native speakers use many more of the longer nominal groups of 7 words and above.

Verbal Groups

As was the case with nominal groups, non-native speakers used more verbal groups, but shorter ones. I have broken this down further to show the relative frequencies of various lengths of verbal group, as given in table 7.

TABLE 7 Distribution of Verbal Groups of Various Lengths

Question 1					Question 4				
Length in number of words	1	2	3	4	Length in number of words	1	2	3	4
N	53%	34%	9%	3%	N	56%	37%	7%	0
OP	79%	21%	0	0	OP	64%	33%	3%	0
OF	89%	12%	0	0					
Question 2					Question 5				
Length in number of words	1	2	3	4	Length in number of words	1	2	3	4
N	40%	40%	19%	0	N	69%	29%	2%	0
OP	69%	26%	4%	0	OP	74%	22%	4%	0
OF	76%	21%	3%	0					
Question 3					Question 6				
Length in number of words	1	2	3	4	Length in number of words	1	2	3	4
N	50%	22%	27%	1%	N	52%	41%	7%	0
OP	68%	22%	11%	0	OP	59%	39%	2%	0
					OF	93%	7%	0	0

Average:	1	2	3	4
N	53%	34%	12%	1%
O	74%	22%	4%	0

Commentary

The top row indicates verbal groups of 1, 2, 3, and 4 words in length, and the numbers below indicate the approximate percentage of each length of verbal group to the total number of verbal groups for each student.

In all cases non-native speakers had a much greater percentage of one-word verbal groups than native speakers. Native speakers had a greater percentage of two-, three-, and four-word groups, The averages for the whole sample, shown at the bottom of the page, bring this out very clearly.

Adverbials follow the same pattern as the nominal and verbal groups - more numerous in the case of non-native speakers, longer in the case of native speakers. This is to be expected as nominal groups normally feature as part of the longer adverbial groups.

The count of actual and intended grammatical features just presented indicates that non-native speakers are not utilizing, or even attempting, to utilize, certain of the resources of the English language; passivisation, relativisation, and complex nominalisation are three very marked instances. Whether or not this vitiates optimal communication (by, for example, non-standard theme/information structuring) is a question outside the scope of the present analysis.

Level 4 Types of Statements

Here an attempt was made to isolate and count various types of 'statement' the students were making at a semantic rather than a syntactic level. This was difficult to do, as the 'statements' tended to be intertwined with one another (see example below) and the analysis was inevitably rather subjective. However, I believe it reflects the trends of the various scripts.

A sentence taken from one script exemplifies the difficulties.

> 'Most of these are present in higher concentrations in the red blood cells than in plasma, and so estimation in plasma would make this method more specific.'

Here there is a statement concerning a biochemical state or condition (. . . are present in higher concentrations . . .), statements concerning location (in the red blood cells, in plasma (x 2)), statements of comparison (higher concentrations, more specific), and a statement of consequence (. . . and so. . .). This example therefore contains 7 statements of the kind I was trying to isolate. I should add that the example quoted is a particularly complex one, given here for the sake of illustration.

The 'statements' isolated were divided into three types:

Type 1	Statements describing biochemical items and events, as established in the discipline, and statements on established professional procedure.
Type 2	Conceptual statements
Type 3	Qualifying statements

Type 1 Statements

TABLE 8 **Statements on biochemical items and events and professional procedure**

		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k
		Structure of items	Properties of items	Events	States/ conditions	Location of items	Location of events	Professional procedure	Timing of events	Accompanying circumstances (to events, states professional procedure)	Total	% to overall no. of statements for each student
1	N	2	1	7	0	4	2	0	3	1	20	39
	OP	1	0	14	1	2	1	0	5	5	29	66
	OF	1	0	7	0	0	1	0	2	0	11	57
2	N	1	1	4	17	2	1	9	1	7	43	40
	OP	0	0	7	19	1	2	10	1	5	45	54
	OF	1	0	15	18	0	3	4	4	4	49	49
3	N	1	8	4	8	0	0	14	3	3	41	37
	OF	1	1	6	0	0	0	9	0	1	18	42
4	N	9	0	22	14	7	1	4	6	9	72	49
	OF	6	0	6	8	2	2	0	3	8	35	69
5	N	4	9	13	1	8	9	1	1	6	52	45
	OF	0	0	18	0	2	11	1	1	3	36	44
6	N	22	0	12	8	1	1	3	0	11	58	50
	OP	15	1	16	2	0	1	7	0	6	48	52
	OF	14	0	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	21	55

Averages:

Total numbers of statements of this type:

Native Speakers:	47.7
Non-native Speakers:	32.4

Percentages of Type 1 statements to total numbers of statements for each group:

Native Speakers:	43%
Non-native Speakers:	54%

17

Commentary

There appears to be some patterning of the concentrations of the various subtypes of statement given in the table according to the demands of the question set. Descriptions of biochemical events figure largely in all scripts. Descriptions of the structure of biochemical items figure prominently in the scripts for Question 6. The patterning is not always what one would expect from the wording of the question: there are relatively few statements on professional procedure in the Question 4 scripts, and relatively many in the Question 2 scripts.

The averages given below the table are the most interesting things to emerge from this table, especially when considered in relation to the averages for the other types of statement to be given below. On a straight count, the native speakers made many more of this type of statement than the non-native speakers (an average of 47.7 as against 32.4): this is obviously at least partly because the native speaker scripts tended to be longer anyway. However, if we look at the percentage of this type of statement to the total number of statements for each group (ie to the total of type 1, type 2 and type 3 statements), we can see that much fewer than half of the statements made by the native speakers are of this type, (43%), compared with rather more than half (54%) in the case of the non-native speakers.

Type 2 Statements

TABLE 9 Conceptual statements

		a		b		c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
		• Classifications		• Definitions		Statements of function	Statements of cause/effect	Exemplification	Glosses	Mathematical Relationships	Comparison/ Contrast	Total	% to total number of statements
		(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)								
1	N	6	1	0	0	3	12	2	0	0	0	24	47
	OP	1	3	0	0	2	8	0	1	0	0	15	34
	OF	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	6	32
2	N	0	1	1	0	5	28	6	1	0	0	42	39
	OP	1	1	0	0	0	7	2	1	0	0	12	14
	OF	4	1	1	2	3	32	2	0	1	0	46	46
3	N	0	1	0	0	0	14	1	0	8	2	26	24
	OF	2	1	0	0	1	6	1	0	2	0	13	30
4	N	0	4	2	2	5	12	1	1	1	7	35	24
	OF	3	3	0	1	1	5	0	1	0	0	14	27
5	N	2	2	0	0	28	7	13	0	2	4	58	50
	OF	0	1	0	0	27	9	6	0	0	1	44	54
6	N	1	3	0	9	1	24	1	2	0	3	45	38
	OP	3	2	0	5	3	11	2	0	5	5	36	39
	OF	0	1	0	2	2	6	0	0	2	0	13	34

- Classifications (a) – division of an item into categories
  (b) – assignment of an item to a category
- Definitions (a) – name of item preceding definition
  (b) – name of item following definition (naming definition)

Averages:

Total numbers of statements of this type:

Native Speakers: 36.3 Non-native Speakers: 22.0

Percentages of Type 2 statements to total numbers of statements for each group:

Native Speakers: 37% Non-native Speakers: 34%

Commentary

As with type 1 statements, there is some evidence of patterning according to the question set. Statements of cause and effect are prominent in all scripts, and in particular in the scripts for questions 2 and 6. This prominence matches that of type 1 'events' statements: the events are frequently linked by cause/effect relationships. Statements of function and exemplification are prominent in Question 5 scripts, and definitions in Question 6 scripts.

The average total numbers of statements of this type given at the bottom of the table are again a function of the differing average lengths of the scripts. The percentage figures indicate that conceptual statements, if seen as a proportion of the total numbers of statements made in each case, occur more or less as frequently in non-native speakers as in native speakers.

Type 3 Statements

TABLE 10 Qualifying Statements

		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
		Uncertainty	Modifiers	Possibility	Probability	Impossibility	Evaluations	Rationales of Evaluations	Total	% to overall number of statements
1	N	2	3	1	0	1	0	0	7	14
	OP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	OF	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	11
2	N	1	3	11	1	1	3	3	23	21
	OP	0	2	3	0	0	1	0	6	7
	OF	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	5	6
3	N	1	2	7	1	0	14	13	38	35
	OF	0	1	3	0	0	7	2	13	30
4	N	1	6	11	2	0	0	0	20	14
	OF	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	4
5	N	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	5	4
	OF	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
6	N	1	2	9	0	2	0	0	14	12
	OP	0	1	4	0	1	0	0	6	7
	OF	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3

Averages:

Total numbers of statements of this type:

Native Speakers: 17.8 Non-native Speakers: 4.0

Percentages of Type 3 statements to total numbers of statements for each group:

Native Speakers: 17% Non-native Speakers: 8%

Commentary

The statements counted here include modality, statements of modification (largely such expressions as **to some extent, usually, sometimes, quite,** etc.) and statements of evaluation (usually of professional procedure). Statements offering justifications for evaluations (column g), are also included because of their close association with the evaluative statements. The divisions between the various categories in the table are by no means watertight: allocation of an item to one or the other was occasionally arbitrary. This does not however obscure the significance of the average totals: differences between native and non-native speakers made very few of this type of statement, even when seen as a percentage of their total statements.

This concludes the analysis carried out to date. As it was carried out with no reference to the actual content of the scripts, it does little toward resolving the basic dichotomy as to what was primarily to blame in the case of these students, factors of a general educational or cultural nature, or deficient language ability. There is evidence for both types of factors as possible causes of poor performance: on the one hand the analysis at levels 1 and 3 may suggest a tendency on the part of the overseas students to aim at minimal content (ie short length) and a tendency to level over finer distinctions, (ie few qualifying statements) while on the other hand the analysis at level 2 may suggest the non-availability to the overseas students of certain linguistic devices. A natural step forward would be to match such purely linguistic analyses with the comments of subject specialists. However, the frequent impracticality of such co-operative ventures does not detract from the value of linguistic analyses (perhaps including other quantitatively measurable aspects as word frequency and cohesion) as interim practical moves in attempts to determine the needs of overseas students in what are often very urgent situations.

References

MUIR, J (9172)
A Modern Approach to English Grammar. An Introduction to Systemic Grammar. B T Batsford Ltd, London

QUIRK, R et al (1972)
A Grammar of Contemporary English. Longman.

SCOTT, F S et al (1968)
English Grammar. A Linguistic Study of its Classes and Structures. Heinemann

University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Examinations for the Degree of Master of Science in Clinical Biochemistry, 1975-1978

Thanks are due to the Department of Clinical Biochemistry, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, for making the examination scripts available for analysis, and in particular to Dr A W Skillen for his help in selecting appropriate scripts and his useful comments